Chronicles

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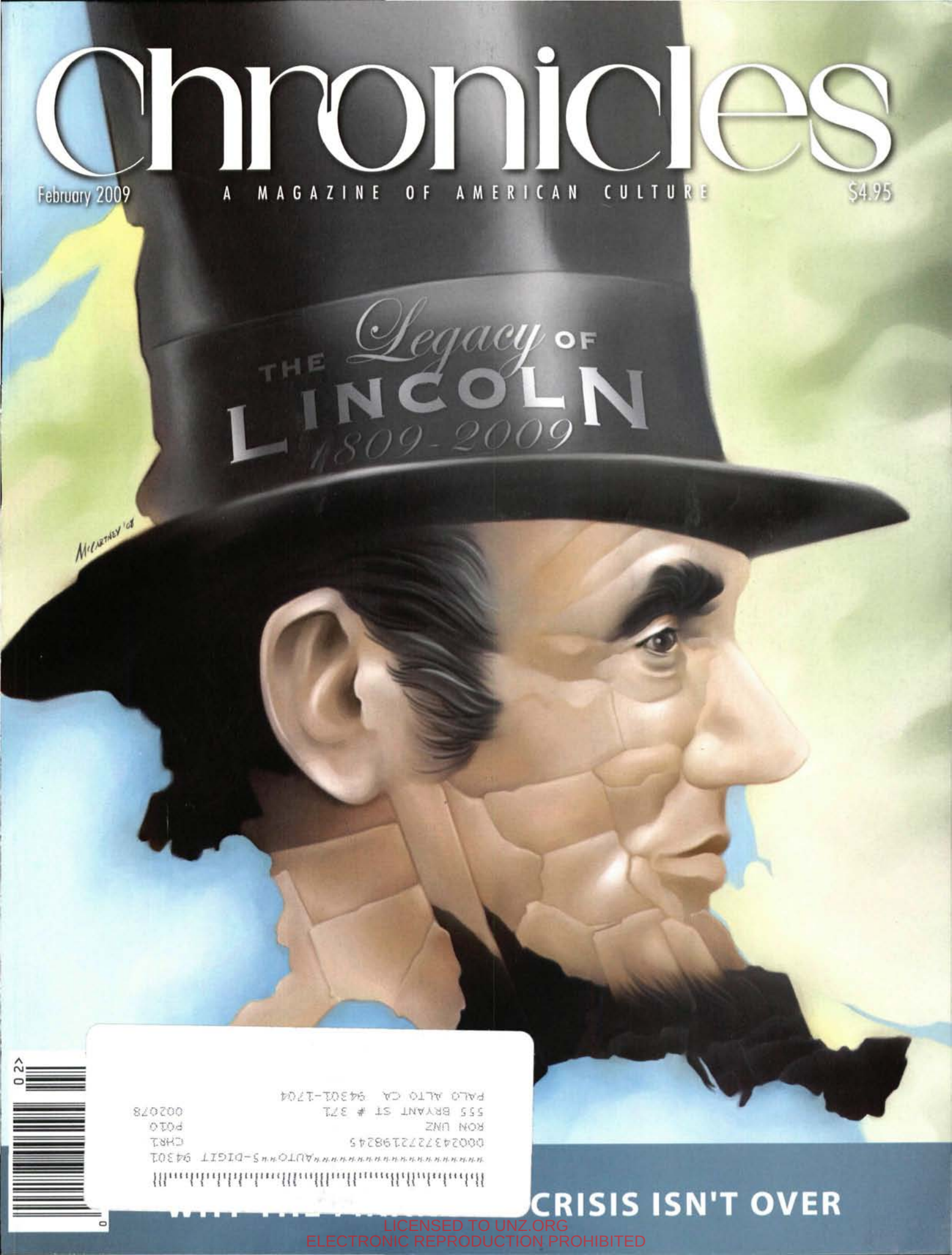

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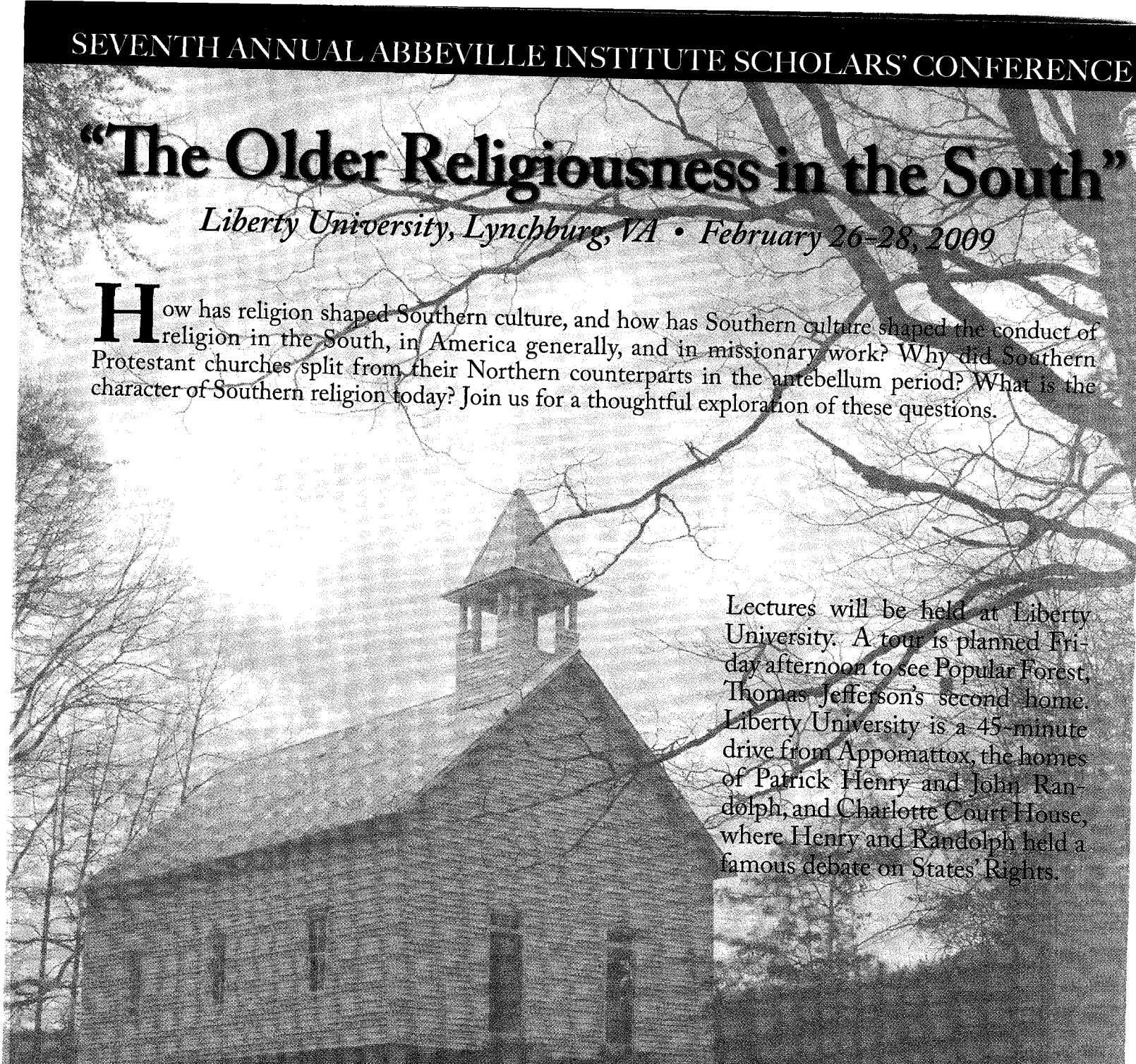

Lectures will be held at Liberty University. A tour is planned Friday afternoon to see Popular Forest, Thomas Jefferson's second home. Liberty University is a 45-minute drive from Appomattox, the homes of Patrick Henry and John Randolph, and Charlotte Court House, where Henry and Randolph held a famous debate on States' Rights.

"Shadows of the Old South: the Southern Presbyterians in Korea," Dr. Stephen Linton ◈ "R.L. Dabney and Old School Presbyterianism," Prof. Roger Schultz ◈ "James Henley Thornwell: Lost Cause Theology," Prof. Bill Wilson ◈ "Its Own Encounter with God': Persisting Patterns of Traditional Faith in the Old Confederacy," Prof. Jason Bergren ◈ "Confederate Methodists: How the Methodist Episcopal Church, South Contributed to Southern Identity," Prof. Glen Spann ◈ "The Protestant Episcopal Church and the Question of Southern Identity During the War Between the States," Prof. Robert Valentine ◈ "The Man of Letters and the Religious Imagination: Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Walker Percy," Prof. Jay Langdale ◈ "Richard Weaver, the Gospel, and the Restoration of Culture," Prof. Brad Green ◈ "'A Feudal Society Without a Feudal Religion': Rethinking Tate's Criticism of Southern Religion," Prof. Clark Carlton

Participants reserve their own accommodations. Rooms have been reserved at Sleep Inn, Candlers Mountain Road, Lynchburg, VA 24502, (434) 846-6900. The hotel is within walking distance of the Conference.

A conference fee of $50.00 is required for two lunches and two suppers. Please send check prior to the conference, payable to The Abbeville Institute, 478 Burlington Rd., Atlanta, Ga. 30307. E-mail questions to *abbevilleinst@bellsouth.net* or call (404) 377-0484.

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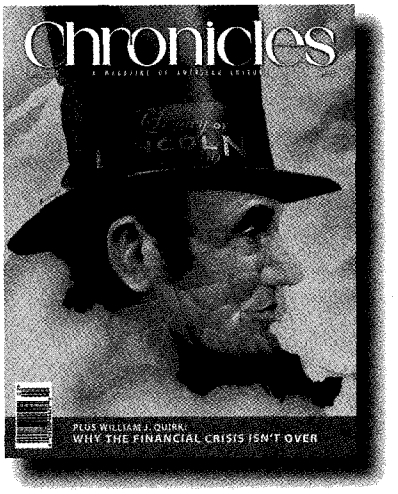

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Crusading

Kudos to Dr. Srdja Trifkovic, whose "New Grand Strategy" (*American Interest*, December) tells us what sensibly ought to be. The stooges inhabiting Foggy Bottom will never look up from their feed troughs to show half the intelligence of your master diplomat. I wish him Godspeed on his new ventures, and wish that Obama had the sense and courage to defy his masters and adopt that column's strategy—and the strategist—as his own.

Fr. Hugh Barbour's inquiry into the "theological case for the Crusades" ("*Sola Scriptura*," *Views*), with its anchor on indulgences, has some merit, but there was much more to the initial impetus to the crusading movement than that. Indeed, as the theological essence became more dominant in the later "Crusades," they became more like religious "statements" and increasingly less successful militarily.

The only Crusade that was in any true measure a success was the first, while the rhetoric of Urban II was more a trigger setting in motion a militant wave that had been building for generations. As Father Hugh noted, the Norman conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily, and the burgeoning Reconquista, preceded the crusading effort directed into the Middle East.

Just one factor illustrating that the Crusades had less a theological than a political and economic basis is the role played by the Normans of Italy. The Normans and Urban II were political antagonists throughout the latter's pontificate. They sought lands and power, often at the expense of the papacy. For the First Crusade, the core of the army was provided by Normans, who sought and took major holdings associated with the Christian kingdom that the Crusade established. Major contingents were organized and led by Bohemond and Tancred, both of whom were members of the De Hauteville clan that had conquered the Italian South and humbled the armies of the Pope. Bohemond established himself as prince of Antioch. Tancred became lord of a major segment of the new kingdom ruled from Jerusalem. For them and others who grabbed parcels of the conquest for themselves, the theology of it all was an excuse rather than a reason for venturing into the ripe plum that was the Middle East.

Today, Europe is the plum. The militant wave is from the East. The rationale of the Crusades, led by the likes of Normans bent on conquest, is dead. The Muslims are on the march. Europe is weak theologically and spiritually, and is militarily spineless. The so-called War on Terror is gutted by multiculturalism, secularism, and globalist fantasies that take the heart out of any meaningful, lasting response. Finally, the idea of a bunch of freebooters (such as the Crusaders who responded to Urban) setting off to conquer and establish, on their own, a nation of sorts hacked out of the Middle East would be opposed by the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States with no less dedication than that of the Muslims. Those who must be obeyed would have it so.

—William J. Bonville
Grants Pass, OR

Father Hugh Replies:

It is always important to consider the title of a piece of writing, which, in *Chronicles* at least, determines the most general light by which the article under it should be interpreted. My article, as the title indicates, was precisely on the theological case for the Crusades and was intended to shed light on the contrast between contemporary theological styles and those of the Middle Ages and to suggest in the title and at the very end of the article the contrast between both of these and the Reformation tradition. It may well be that the Reformation tradition provides the link to explain best how we arrived at our present inability to offer a coherent response to the religiously motivated enemies of our civ-

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ilization. Here is where I might have expected the attentive reader to be moved to write a letter! That there were other factors at work in the Crusades common to all political and military movements of any time and place cannot be doubted. My purpose was to discuss what was most specific to the Crusades—that is, their specifically Catholic and medieval theological motivation—not to assert that this motivation was the exclusive or even the predominant motivation of the crusaders themselves. One thing a Catholic assessment of history never assumes is universally pure motives from members of a fallen race!

On Darwinian Chaos

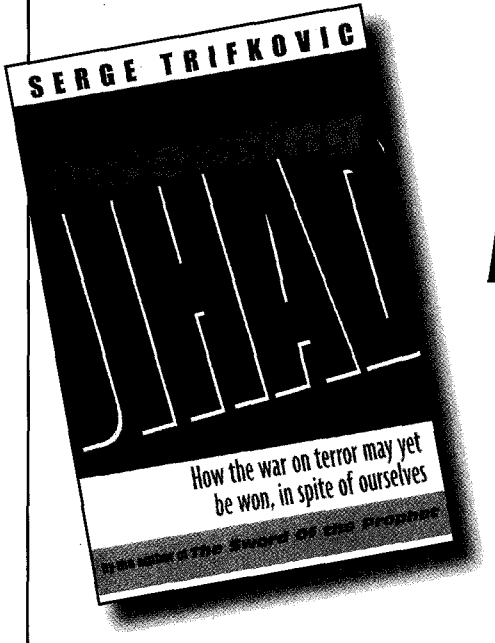
Fr. Michael P. Orsi's review of John G. West's *Darwin Day in America* ("Man on Holiday," *Reviews*, December) is compelling, as far as it goes. However, neither he nor apparently West refers to a powerful theoretical argument against Darwinian evolution: the Second Law of Thermodynamics. In very simplified language, this law states that it is impossible for practical purposes to produce order/organization by means of random processes (Darwin's natural selection). A much better but perhaps still not sufficient approach is through chaotic processes. Chaos is not equivalent to randomness. Indeed, chaotic processes also embody high degrees of "spontaneous ordering" through "feedback"—or, to use the technical term, "nonlinearity." It is my strong belief that chaos plays a major role in evolution, but by its very nature the evolutionary history is impossible to unravel. Hence we will never have a satisfactory theory of the "descent of Man." Very small instabilities, as microscopic as the quantum level, lead to enormous changes in the evolving system. Such instabilities in the atmosphere prevent reliable weather prediction for more than a few days. This, in my view, is the manner in which "Intelligent Design" plays out.

Although retired from NASA, I still work part time on planetary research for the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California. At a meeting of the employees a couple of years ago, I overheard another researcher praise the decision against Intelligent Design by a federal judge in Delaware. When I asked him how one gets order from random processes, he stormed out, refusing to discuss the matter further. On another occasion I exchanged e-mail about Darwinian evolution with a professor at an Eastern university. I raised the Second Law problem, with a possible partial solution lying in chaos theory. His reply was, in effect, that my argument about randomness and chaos was a "distinction without a difference." Of course, as I explained previously, they are not even remotely similar.

The Darwinists' main objective seems to be the destruction of traditional religion. While they have not accomplished that, they have succeeded in creating their own false god.

—Robert C. Whitten
Cupertino, CA

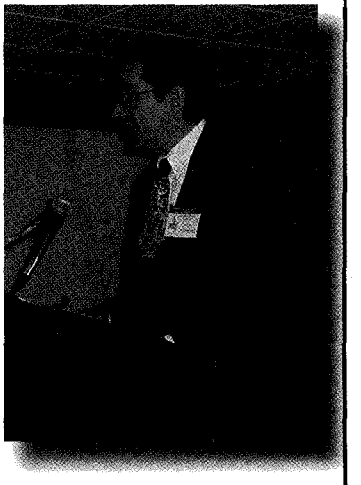
From the author of *The Sword of the Prophet*



*"The victory will come not by conquering Mecca for America but **by disengaging America from Mecca** and by excluding Mecca from America. Eliminating the risk is impossible. Managing it wisely, resolutely, and permanently is something attainable."*

Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic



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DEFE

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by Leon Hadar

Whither Obama's Foreign Policy?

According to the *Washington Post*, a senior diplomat from a major European country, a Middle Eastern ambassador, and an Asian ambassador—all of whom represent "major, big-league countries"—have been getting lots of messages from their home offices wondering how exactly President Obama will exert his influence over the contracting American Empire.

Apparently "Barack Obama's folks aren't talking" to these and other diplomats who, like the rest of the "insiders" in Washington, have been unable to figure out Obama's foreign-policy direction. This suggests to some that Obama has a coherent foreign-policy vision as well as a strategy to implement it; he's just doing a great job at keeping all of that top secret—certainly a valuable skill for those who want to win victories in the games that nations play.

But perhaps this interpretation gives too much credit to the President's diplomatic skills. Is it possible that he actually does not have any grand diplomatic strategy in mind and that the code of silence that Obama and his aides have maintained stems from the fact that they have nothing to hide—or say?

In a way, this Obama Enigma explains why those of us who are trying to solve the mystery and come up with some predictions about Obama's diplomacy end up projecting our own hopes—or fears—on the situation. Hence, many opponents of the neoconservative agenda, including some who would describe themselves as conservative or libertarian, announced their support for the Obama candidacy based largely on his earlier opposition to the war in Iraq, his willingness to open a diplomatic dialogue with Iran and Syria (as opposed to invading them), and his criticism of the Bush administration's messianic foreign policy. From this perspective, when you compared him with the ideologues and fanatics who have been in charge of our diplomacy during the last eight years, Obama sounded almost . . . conservative.

Indeed, Obama reiterated several times during the campaign that he had a lot of respect for the *Realpolitik* types who were responsible for the more traditional diplomacy of the first President Bush. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Obama consulted one of those realist luminaries, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, about his choices for foreign-policy positions in the Obama administration. And the fact that two Republicans who adhere to the realist school of thought and have been critical of the Bush administration's Iraq adventure—former Nebraska Sen. Chuck Hagel and former Secretary of State Colin Powell—endorsed Obama seems to have burnished Obama's credentials as the anti-neocon candidate both in the Democratic primaries against Hillary Clinton, who had voted in favor of the congressional resolution authorizing Bush to attack Iraq, and in the general election, as Obama ran against *The Weekly Standard*'s presidential candidate.

While the members of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party have never been fans of the Kissingerian wing of the Republican Party, they seemed to share Scowcroft's loathing of the neocons and regarded Obama as the only serious challenger to Senator Clinton. The former First Lady was perceived to be more hawkish than Obama, especially in light of her close ties to the pro-Israel community and her suggestion that the United States may need to use military power against Iran to prevent the mullahs from acquiring nuclear bombs. The biography of a mixed-race/African-American public figure, who had spent some of his school years in Indonesia and was the son of a Kenyan man, clearly helped to turn Obama into the multicultural darling of the Democratic Party's cosmopolitan intelligentsia, whose members hoped that Obama would be able not only to reverse Bush's neoconservative policies but to win the hearts and minds of Muslims everywhere.

It is too early to say that these expectations have not been fulfilled. But one could feel the pain of some of the readers of *The Nation* and *Mother Jones*, the regular viewers of Keith Olbermann's *Countdown*, and perhaps even some readers of *Chronicles* and *The American Conservative*, after Obama announced that he was retaining Robert Gates as secretary of defense and nominating Hillary Clinton as secretary of state and retired Gen. James Jones as his national-security advisor. The noninterventionists' mood was probably not improved after reading that Obama was also asking current undersecretary Bill Burns to stay on and was planning to select former U.N. Amb. Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and former Middle East advisor Dennis Ross as special envoy to the Middle East. Indeed, those of us who were hoping and praying for a new paradigm under which the President would start removing the foundations of the American Empire—U.S. disengagement from the Middle East; an end to the special relationship with Israel; U.S. withdrawal from NATO; termination of the U.S. military pacts with Japan and South Korea; a less belligerent approach toward Russia—were bound to be disappointed by Obama's foreign-policy team, whose members remain committed to a hegemonic project in the Middle East and elsewhere and whose political survival depends very much on satisfying the needs of both local and foreign interests, the Beltway Bandits, Big Business, and the rest of the rent seekers whose wealth and power derive from the earnings generated by the American Empire.

But then, Obama never said that he

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planned to embrace the noninterventionist foreign-policy agendas of the Taft Republicans or McGovern Democrats: George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton were his role models when it came to diplomacy and national security. And these two were both committed to maintaining a dominant position in the post-Cold War era, which included the use of military force in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. Admittedly, neither Bush I nor Clinton embraced the more ambitious neoconservative policy proposals that called for invading countries in the Middle East and establishing a permanent U.S. military presence there. And while they and their aides occasionally employed Wilsonian rhetoric, they never had any urge to "liberate" Iraq and impose democracy on the Middle East. Theirs was an opportunistic foreign policy that took advantage of the collapse of the former Soviet Union and America's economic might to establish a dominant position in the Middle East and East Asia, to expand NATO to the borders of Russia, and to continue calling the shots at the United Nations and other multilateral organizations. Under Clinton and Holbrooke, Bush I and Scowcroft, Washington could maintain an American Empire whose costs the American people were willing to bear.

With the help of the Clintonites and the Scowcrofts, Obama is hoping to recreate that kind of "New World Order." Hence, applying diplomatic means to reach a "grand bargain" with Iran and to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process could permit the United States to withdraw her troops from Iraq and reassert her influence in the Middle East. Creative statesmanship could also help reduce tensions in South Asia and create the conditions necessary for stability in Afghanistan. Working more closely with the European Union, Washington could bargain and make deals with the Russians. And then there is America's Soft Power, charged by the sex appeal of Mr. Cosmopolitan Cool himself; that charm could seduce even the most fanatic Islamic terrorist.

The problem with this kind of strategy is that the America of 2009 may find it very difficult to secure even the less ambitious goal of being first among equals. The debacle in Iraq and the mess that Washington has made in the Middle East, coupled with the horrific costs of the financial crisis, have eroded U.S. military and economic power—and, by extension, U.S. diplomatic influence. Is Iran even interested in playing ball with Obama? Could America help deliver an Israeli-Palestinian peace? Will the Europeans continue to follow American leadership, or will they try to make separate deals with Russia? And then there is China and India, both of whom are climbing up the economic and military ladder just as America seems to be stepping down. Given those circumstances, *Realpolitik* in the Obama Age could prove to be a painful cost-cutting exercise as Washington readjusts to the realities of the postneoconservative era. Imperial retrenchment could prove to be the default choice of our new President. ◈

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McCAIN'S REVENGE

Did John McCain throw the election?

Is it just me, or was there a certain elegaic tone to the Republican presidential campaign, a *McCain's Last Hurrah* narrative that precluded victory around the time the stock market took a dive? It was then that McCain signed a joint statement with his Democratic rival, urging lawmakers "to rise above politics for the good of the country" and give untold trillions to the Money Power because "we cannot risk economic catastrophe. Now is our chance to come together to prove that Washington is once again capable of leading this country."

If McCain had opposed the bailout, there might have been a different outcome to the election. The populist fervor that energized the Obama campaign might have been transferred to the GOP, and the anti-bailout sentiment that had no voice or champion could have catapulted McCain into the White House. At that point, however, the noble martyrdom of the steadfast patriot who rises above petty partisan politics takes over, and as always with McCain, persona trumps politics—or, rather, covers up the real politics at work here. With our lame-duck President just as eager as the Democrats to start shoveling cash into the corporate maw, McCain refused to take the one step that would have separated him from President Bush—and from Obama—in a dramatic way.

There were earlier signs, however, that McCain was resigned to defeat. The real key to understanding the point at which this defeatism set in was the choice of Sarah Palin as his running mate. She is undoubtedly charming and telegenic, but these attributes—taken by themselves—are good for a career in show business, or modeling, but aren't quite enough to qualify one for the Oval Office. The evidence that Palin was vetted is scarce, and so are credible reasons for the choice: It must have been clear to McCain that she was not at all prepared to take the helm should he be incapacitated—a not unlikely scenario, given his age. The Palin choice was a clear signal from the McCain camp that they didn't take their own campaign seriously—and didn't expect anybody else to, either.

The Palin choice was all the more odd in the context of the McCain campaign's attempt to paint their Democratic opponent as an airheaded celebrity. It's almost as if the McCainiacs were mocking themselves.

McCain held his fire on many important issues, aside from the bailout. Obama's close, years-long relationship with the Reverend Wright, his "mentor," was a potentially lethal weapon that was never fired—for reasons that are hard to fathom. In the name of "honor" and running a "clean" campaign, McCain made it clear that the Wright issue was off limits. Yet, somehow, the Bill Ayers connection—far more tenuous and arguably marginal—was considered fair game. There is no logic to this, except for the logic of a campaign that had already decided to lose.

One other factor that should not be downplayed or ignored is the revenge factor. McCain has always been an outsider in the Republican Party: For a self-described "maverick," that goes with the territory. He has been at odds with conservatives for years, and his run-in with Rush Limbaugh during the campaign, not to mention his clash with the Religious Right during the 2000 primary, and with James Dobson during the recent primary, was enough to embitter anyone—and there is every indication that McCain took it very personally. McCain's loyalty to the GOP is not even skin-deep: Recall his 2004 trial balloon that he might consider running on the Democratic ticket with John Kerry at the top. Add to this McCain's infamous temper, and the idea that he threw the election to get back at his enemies in the party is not all that far-fetched.

A campaign characterized by serial missteps, public backbiting, an inadequate running mate, a lack of focus, and a complete unwillingness to confront the Democrats on issues that matter to the American people—all of these factors, considered separately, could well have been the products of circumstance. Taken together, however, they plausibly add up to something worse than mere incompetence.

—Justin Raimondo

PATRIARCH ALEKSY, R.I.P.

Aleksy II, Patriarch of Moscow and head of the Russian Orthodox Church, died of heart failure on December 5, 2008, at the age of 79.

Born in Estonia in 1929 into a pious family of Russian émigrés of German extraction, Aleksei Mikhailovich Ridiger was ordained a priest in 1950, completed his theological studies in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) three years later, and was tonsured in 1961. His subsequent rise through the ranks of the Russian Orthodox Church—allegedly facilitated by a KGB connection, which he always denied—culminated in his election as Patriarch in 1990.

Aleksy II came to the throne just as the Soviet state was beginning to disintegrate. The early years of his tenure were dominated by the tremendous task of restoring the moral authority of the Church in a nation devastated by seven decades of lethal anti-Christian rule.

The scale of that devastation defies imagination. Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church and other denominations under the communists is one of the greatest crimes in history. Its death toll was several times greater than that of the holocaust. It had killed more Christians than all other persecutions in all ages put together, with Islam a distant second. In 20 interwar years (1918-38), the number of churches that remained open in Russia was reduced from 54,000 to under 500—less than one percent of the pre-Bolshevik total. Some 600 Orthodox bishops, 40,000 priests, 120,000

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monks and nuns, and millions of laymen were murdered.

Even in the late Soviet period the Orthodox Church was at best grudgingly tolerated, hindered from playing any role in a society that was drowning in despair, vodka, and cynicism. Yet Aleksy II's considerable diplomatic tact and organizational ability were already evident during the 1980's, when he secured the Soviet authorities' acquiescence in the return of Holy Danilov Monastery, which has been restored to its old status as the official headquarters of the patriarchate. In 1988 he used the celebration of the "Millennium of Faith" in Russia to raise the profile of his Church in a manner unimaginable under Mikhail Gorbachev's predecessors.

The end of communism enabled the Russian Orthodox Church to assume her old role of moral leader amid the collapse of all secular institutions. A major test of Aleksy's political savvy came in the summer of 1991, when old Soviet loyalists tried to stage a coup. The Patriarch contributed to its failure by sternly condemning the shedding of civil blood: "May God protect you from the terrible sin of fratricide . . . Cease at once!" The army obeyed. This remarkable fact was a testimony to Aleksy's steady cultivation of the military and security *apparat* well before his rise to the patriarchate.

During the ensuing decade the number of self-identified believers in Russia was to grow threefold, and the number of parishes fiftyfold, to 30,000. But Aleksy's greatest accomplishment was his role in the 2007 reunion of the branches of the Russian Church abroad and at home. The reunification, together with the glorification of the Royal Martyrs Nicholas II and his family, the return to Sarov of the relics of Saint Seraphim, and the veneration of warrior saints such as Aleksandr Nevsky and Prince Dmitry Donsky, "signaled the reconsolidation of what had been ripped apart in 1917," says foreign-affairs analyst James Jatras. Jatras notes that its counterpart in the civil sphere is "Putin's careful and deliberate amalgamation of White and Red symbolism." This synthesis lends itself to the vision articulated by the late Gen. Aleksandr Lebed: "The Church strengthens the army; the army defends the Church. And on this restored spiritual axis—the two pillars of our power—we can begin to feel like Russians again."

While routinely accused in the West of excessively close links to the secular authorities, Patriarch Aleksy took pains to define what is permissible and what is not in the relationship between Church and state. He rejected any absolutization of governmental authority and insisted that the temporal powers of the state should be recognized as imperative only to the degree that they are used to support good and limit evil. Aleksy's position was codified in 2000 by the Jubilee Council of Bishops. Its "Basic Social Concept"—drafted with his blessing—stated that, "in everything that concerns the exclusively earthly order of things, the Orthodox Christian is obliged to obey the law." However, when compliance "threatens his eternal salvation and involves an apostasy or commitment of another doubtless sin before God and his neighbor, the Christian is called to perform the feat of confession. . . . If this lawful action is impossible or ineffective, he must take up the position of civil disobedience. The Church is loyal to the state, but God's commandment to fulfill the task of salvation in any situation and under any circumstances is above this loyalty. . . . If the authority forces Orthodox believers to apostatise from Christ and His Church and to commit sinful and spiritually harmful actions, the Church should refuse to obey the state . . . [it] must resist evil, immorality and harmful social phenomena and always firmly confess the Truth, and when persecutions commence, to continue to openly witness the faith and be prepared to follow the path of confessors and martyrs for Christ."

Christians everywhere would be well advised to reflect on the meaning and implications of those words.

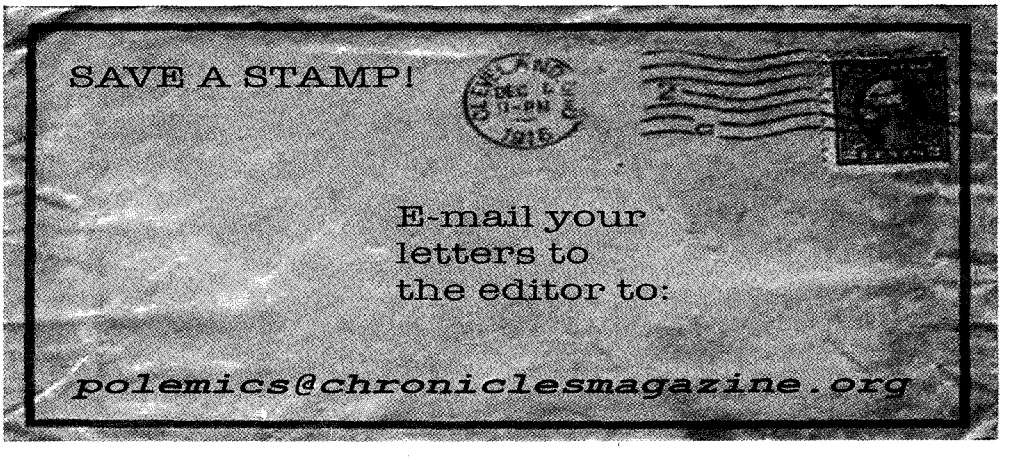
—*Srdja Trifkovic*

OBITER DICTA

New to the pages of *Chronicles* this month is our poet, **Joseph O'Brien**. A graduate of the University of Dallas, Mr. O'Brien, a freelance writer, lives on a rural homestead in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin, with his wife and seven children. He can be heard reading from Catholic works of literature, great and small, as the online host of *Cover to Cover* for Catholic Radio International (*www.catholicradiointernational.com*).

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and their children.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.



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by Thomas Fleming

Rendering Unto Lincoln

"Now he belongs to the ages," Edwin Stanton is supposed to have said, when he learned of President Lincoln's death. In a trivial sense at least, Stanton was obviously correct. We have Lincoln's face on the five-dollar bill—a bill that used to be worth more than a Happy Meal, before Lincoln's disciples degraded the currency—and his grandiose monument in Washington, with a grotesque statue by the Transcendentalist sculptor-politician Daniel Chester French. We even used to celebrate Lincoln's birthday as a federal holiday, but, now that there is no god but the 14th Amendment and Martin Luther King, Jr., is its prophet, poor Lincoln's stock has sunk so low that he is lumped together with Millard Fillmore, U.S. Grant, Warren Harding, and Jimmy Carter—those paragons of American political life—in a generic Presidents Day, whose very name suggests that Americans are determined to forget their past. Why not an "American Patriotic Holidays Day" or a "World Religions Day"? I shudder to make this joke, knowing that this is a country where all bad jokes come true. (Did you catch the inauguration ceremony on television?)

In a deeper sense, though, the Lincoln years and their legacy represent the most significant revolution that the United States have undergone. We went from being a confederation of republics that minded their own business, and permitted farmers, merchants, and manufacturers to mind theirs, to a global empire run by stockjobbers, moneychangers, and Transcendentalist do-gooders, a Leviathan with wings that is forever busybodying at home and abroad. From a fairly homogeneous ethnic base—a British core with Northern European accretions—we have morphed into a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural population in which no one, not even descendants of the oldest stock, knows or cares who he is. Leftists now rejoice that the White House will be presided over by someone whose middle name is Hussein and actually run by someone whose middle name is Israel. What a wicked country this was, when we had to be content with people named Washington, Adams, and Jefferson!

No sensible person can deny the reality of the transformation nor the fact that its first phase coincided with Lincoln's administrations and those of his heirs and successors. James McPherson and other leftists exult in the revolution, while M.E. Bradford deplored it, but neither doubted that it happened. But how fair is it to blame Lincoln personally for what happened? Many of Lincoln's cronies would have been puzzled by the allegation that the man they knew as a railroad lawyer and courthouse politician could have staged a revolution. Edwin Stanton, Lincoln's dictatorial secretary of war who breathed the spirit of martial law against any and all opposition, might be imagined to have admired a President whose arbitrary ways and contempt for the Constitution gave him so much power, but Stanton's early attitude toward Lincoln was little short of contempt, and, while he succeeded in overcoming—or at least concealing—his distaste, he and his boss were frequently at loggerheads. Like some other prominent players in Lincoln's government (W.H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Charles Francis Adams, Sr.), Stanton probably did not think Lincoln was up to the job. Adams, leaving the country to take up his duties as ambassador to England, tried to interest the President in his sensitive mission but could not distract him from his absorption in "the distribution of offices." Over a decade after Lincoln's assassination, he still recalled the "moral, intellectual, and executive incompetency" displayed by Lincoln upon taking office.

In more recent years both Samuel Francis and David Donald (Lincoln's most respectable apologist) have described an office-seeking money-grubbing politician who blundered his way into revolution. I am inclined to agree with them, though with this caveat: A man who pursues and attains an office for which he is unfit must bear the moral blame for the disasters that ensue.

If Lincoln's primary fault was that mixture of ambition and incompetence that has characterized American politicians ever since, he was also a romantic who regarded himself as a Napoleonic character destined for greatness. Indulging in what David Donald calls "a rare moment of self-revelation," Lincoln denigrated the petty politicians who would be content with a seat in Congress: "Such belong not to the family of the lion or the tribe of the eagle." Routine honors would not satisfy "an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon": "Towering genius disdains a beaten path. . . . It thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving free men." Though we may question whether he did much to run up the former of these expenses, there can be no doubt about the latter.

Whatever conclusion one may come to about Lincoln's personal responsibility for the revolution that has transformed America in the past century and a half, we can, at least, evaluate the influence of his rhetoric. As the late

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M.E. Bradford has shown, Lincoln, although a religious skeptic, cloaked his political agenda in a lofty religious language that tended to elevate politics above the mundane give and take of interests that found a nearly perfect expression in the Constitution. Setting aside that document, with its nice adjustment of checks and balances, its weighing of sectional and economic interests, its aspirations toward more perfect union muted by its respect for local peculiarities, Lincoln spoke of the Union with the mystical reverence that Christians reserve for the Holy Ghost. Before he came along, Yankee politicians like Daniel Webster had been purely pragmatic in overstating American unity: It was simply a canny means of advancing their own sectional interest, and thus, when they found themselves checked by opposition from the West and South, they were perfectly willing to compromise.

Lincoln and the other post-Christian Unionists, however, are a different story altogether. Invoking the Old Testament's God of Battles, they sang "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah" as they sent 600,000 American soldiers and perhaps twice as many noncombatants (most of them black) to their graves. Some years ago, when I was debating Lincoln's legacy, a graduate student asked if I did not think the war that freed the slaves was worth the cost. He was actually shocked that I did not think that hundreds of thousands of dead slaves would have agreed with him.

Lincoln was not an original political mind, and his rhetoric is an echo of the French Jacobin who treated mass murder as the noblest part of statecraft. It is in the French Revolution and its aftershocks that ideology began to take the place of religion as the formative rhetoric of Europe and North America. It hardly matters whether that rhetoric is nationalist—the Jacobins, too, celebrated *la patrie*—or globalist, communist, fascist, or democratist. In an ideological regime the citizens are called upon to sacrifice their private interests and the interests of family and friends to some magnificent abstraction like "liberty, equality, and fraternity," the "glorious Union," the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Aryan race, or the fascist republic of Italy. To be fair to the Italian Fascists, they were, perhaps, the least dedicated and (if one overlooks their North African adventures) the least bloodthirsty of ideologues.

Like Lincoln, Robespierre and St.-Just, Lenin and Stalin, and Hitler and Mussolini were anything but Christian, and it is the rejection of Christianity that is the hallmark of modern ideology. Despite recent attempts—as futile as they are foolish—to blame the horrors of modern war on Christianity, the plain truth is that most of these horrors, from the French to the Russian Revolution, from Abraham Lincoln to Pol Pot, were perpetrated by post-Christians, non-Christians, and anti-Christians. This is not because a cross around the neck is some kind of magic talisman that cures the wearer of the Old Adam's tendency to act like a rogue gorilla. Men have learned to behave with some restraint in both pre-Christian and Christian societies, but as Europeans and Americans gave up the Faith, they transferred Christian rhetoric about the Kingdom of God and the Millennium to the political sphere. That is where Robespierre and Marx, Lincoln and John Brown come in.

Here is one great difference between traditional commonwealths—whether republics, empires, or monarchies—and the modern ideological state. In ancient Athens or Rome, in medieval France or England, the ruling class interfered rather little in religion. Yes, as part of a program to gain their citizens' loyalty, Pericles and Augustus instrumentalized traditional cults, and, yes, medieval emperors and kings, in attempting to unify their realms, struggled with popes over the investiture of bishops. But it was the rare ruler (a few theology-crazed Byzantines) who either innovated in theology or interfered in religious practices. During and after the Renaissance, kings and their apologists might speak of "the divine right of kings" and assume the power to make their country either Catholic or Protestant, but even John Knox's Scotland is a very long way from that American ruling class that makes war on the religion we have inherited from our ancestors and insists that we worship the state and its "commander in chief."

The hallmark of the Lincoln regime was not the war crimes perpetrated by Sherman, Grant, and Sheridan (among so many other gallant officers who made war on civilians) but Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase's decision to impose paper money as legal tender and to print the words "IN GOD WE TRUST" on coins. What a world of hypocrisy and idolatry lies in that single act and that little phrase.

This was far from being the world's first experiment in fiat money. The bankrupt states of the Union had tried to cheat themselves out of their debts by issuing banknotes and scrip, and the geniuses of the French National Assembly, even as they were beginning their revolt against civilization, issued large-denomination paper notes known as *assignats*. Initially, these notes were backed by parcels of land the assembly confiscated from the Church, but the temporary success of this experiment encouraged these noble dilettantes and small-town lawyers to repeat and broaden the project. The result was entirely predictable: inflation and financial chaos. Of course, our own financial geniuses know better, which is why the Fed has decided that part of the solution to our current crisis is to print lots and lots more money.

When Our Lord, on a famous occasion, was questioned whether Jews should pay taxes to the empire, He asked to see a coin. Pointing to the face on the coin, He told His mockers to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." In those days, Caesar's things were made of solid metal, and neither Jesus nor Tiberius would have confused the Roman Empire with the Kingdom of God. Salmon Chase should have known better—he seems to have been one of the few believers in Lincoln's Cabinet—but, in putting "IN GOD WE TRUST" on the coin that would one day bear Lincoln's image, he was actually telling us to worship the almighty dollar and the government that created that idol. ◈

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Seneca Visits Athens

by Joseph O'Brien

For David Sweet

Ignoranti, quem portum petat, nullus suus ventus est.

The things the mind would touch prefer
  That they should not be held;
Mine won't stop again to suffer
  Cities it once beheld.

The mind is never subtle
  But passes a hardened hand
Over ancient brick and rubble
  That time grinds to sand.

Before this ruined marble heap
  Of works and days undone,
These walls, note well, they did not keep
  What Nike's deeds had won.

For all are dead and all is lost,
  Nothing to remember,
No hero's grave to ask the cost
  Of so much stone and timber.

One barren thought now thinks to speak.
  My gaze—it rests upon
Designs which fixed time's cause to break
  And call us all to question:

Did princes here, once counting gold
  In tumbled over towers,
Die to see their golden means hold
  Hands with foreign powers?

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by Joseph Sobran

Shattering Lincoln's Dream

I just got a copy of a thoughtful new book, *Vindicating Lincoln: Defending the Politics of Our Greatest President*, by Thomas L. Krannawitter. The book mentions me a couple of times, in polite disagreement. Krannawitter, now of Hillsdale College, is a disciple of Claremont McKenna College's Harry V. Jaffa, as I once was.

The Jaffa school has an unfortunate tendency to talk as if Lincoln agreed with men who didn't always agree with each other: Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton. Unanimity among such strong-minded men of genius would be almost miraculous.

I know of no evidence that Lincoln ever read or mentioned, let alone studied, *The Federalist* (though Krannawitter opines that he "echoes" *Federalist* 49). In fact Lincoln hardly seems aware of the whole ratification debate, the most crucial controversy in American history.

Though Lincoln was largely right about slavery, he was wrong about secession—a separate question, as most Northerners once understood. During his war, millions of Northerners who opposed slavery also recognized the right of a sovereign state to secede from the Union. This led Lincoln to crack down on dissent, closing down hundreds of newspapers (many permanently) and having a few thousand war critics arrested. His excellent biographer David Herbert Donald calls his presidency the worst period for individual liberties in American history.

Lincoln's knowledge of history was shaky, too; in his First Inaugural Address and ever after, he insisted that the states were not, and had never been, sovereign. "The Union," he said in that speech, "is much older than the Constitution."

So much for the Articles of Confederation, which says plainly that "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence . . ." And so much for the Declaration of Independence he so often appealed to, which claims for the 13 former colonies the full status of "free and independent states"—or as Willmoore Kendall put it, "a baker's dozen of new sovereignties," as opposed to Lincoln's "a new nation."

New Jersey and Pennsylvania were sovereign states, just as France, Russia, Prussia, and Holland were. Independence, sovereignty, and autonomy were almost implied by the term statehood. A state was not a subdivision, like a province or county, of a larger entity.

Northern Abolitionists, if they meant what they said, should have welcomed the secession of slave states; and some of them did. But for Lincoln "the Union" was sacred, its terms beyond compromise or negotiation. When Southern cannons killed a horse at Fort Sumter, he launched a war that would kill 600,000 young men. As a result he has received a deification any Roman emperor might envy.

I have sometimes been accused of hating Lincoln; the charge is false. He had qualities that command my esteem and almost affection. The only American President I really loathe is Franklin D. Roosevelt—liar, adulterer, warmonger, friend and benefactor of Stalin and the Soviet Union, betrayer of Christian Europe, father of the nuclear age, enemy of the U.S. Constitution, and a few other things. What's more, it's personal. Several members of my family had to fight in his accursed war; I thank the Lord none of them was killed, though my older cousin Jack was terribly wounded and came home from France permanently mad. (In his lucid moments I never heard him suggest he'd been fighting for freedom.)

Lincoln, we should also remember, was a passionate segregationist, a fact Krannawitter barely touches on, though it might interest our new President to know that the Great Emancipator's preferred solution was to abolish slavery and to remove all "free colored persons" from the United States. In 1862 he proposed an amendment that would authorize Congress to pay for this huge project. "I cannot make it better known than it already is," he wrote in his State of the Union Message to Congress, "that I strongly favor colonization." Nor was this a sudden enthusiasm; he had been arguing for it since the early 1850's. As President, Lincoln did in fact create colonies for black freedmen in Haiti and what is now Panama, giving up on the cause only when these fizzled out. Very few blacks were attracted to such schemes; the United States was the only homeland most blacks had ever known, and it was naive—indeed, utopian—to think they could easily leave it and adapt to Africa.

In August 1862, Lincoln became the first president to invite blacks to the White House; the purpose of this little celebrated historical event was to urge them to lead their liberated brethren ("the African," as he often called them; he would have thought "the African-American" a contradiction in terms) to exercise their freedom by settling abroad. Separation was best for both races, given a physical difference that would make assimilation impossible. (To white audiences he often expressed his horror at racial "amalgamation.")

For months we have been hearing that the election of a black man to the White House was the fulfillment of Lincoln's dream. It would be truer to say that the election of a mulatto was a cruel mockery of his actual dream of a unified, and white, America. ◈

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The Treasury of Counterfeit Virtue

by Clyde Wilson

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

—Robert Burns

A few years ago, a well-known conservative historian lamented that the American public was not morally engaged to undergo sacrifice after the September 11 attacks, unlike it was in its heroic response to Fort Sumter and Pearl Harbor.

Wait a minute. Pearl Harbor and September 11 were massive sneak attacks by foreign enemies. The reduction of Fort Sumter was preceded by a gentlemanly warning, was bloodless, and the garrison was allowed to depart with honor. It would not have happened at all if Abraham Lincoln had not maneuvered to bring it about. Think about this. Why should Southerners (free Americans) permit a fort that had been built with their tax money for their protection to be used as a base to conquer and extort taxes from them, when every other federal post in the South had already been peacefully transferred pending a political settlement of the issues raised by secession? One can become outraged at Fort Sumter only by placing a higher value on the will of the political party controlling the machinery of government than on the core purpose of a free regime to protect the people.

Nor did Lincoln's call after Fort Sumter for 75,000 troops to suppress "the rebellion" evoke unity and determination. The (illegal) call was either a deliberate deception or the most terrible miscalculation in American history, since over a million men would be required to complete the conquest of the Southern people and the destruction of their self-government. The immediate effect of Lincoln's mobilization was to drive four more states out of the Union and to put the border states into bloody play. The long-range effects were military rule in much of the North, a staggering cost in blood, and systematic terrorism against Southern noncombatants.

It is true that Lincoln got a temporary boost of morale from having forced the Confederacy to "fire on the flag," but that did not last. The number of Northern men who evaded service in Mr. Lincoln's war in one way or another was in the hundreds of thousands. Others signed up for the minimal time allowed: There were examples of whole regiments going home on the eve of battle. Compared with complete mobilization in the South, no affluent or connected Northerner ever saw service unless he wanted to. A recent study suggests that Lincoln could not have raised his armies if it had not been for widespread industrial unemployment at the beginning of the war, an immense expenditure on enlistment bounties, and unlimited access to foreign recruits who made up a fourth of the military manpower. More Northerners voted against Lincoln in 1864 than had in 1860, even though the army was dispatched to control the polls. Lincoln and his friends never put complete trust in the Northern public and saw conspiracies under every bed. They behaved with the ruthlessness of a revolutionary cadre. After victory history was edited to portray a unified righteous North.

It is a wonder that the historian mentioned above would even allow Southerners to fight beside real Americans in later wars, since he equates Lee and Jackson with Tojo and Bin Laden. Perhaps it has always been this way in Boston, which happens to be the location of the scholar referred to. But in general it has not always been so. Franklin Roosevelt had no objection to being photographed with Confederate flags. Harry Truman chose a romantic equestrian portrait of Lee and Jackson for the lobby of his presidential library. Dwight Eisenhower went out of his way to correct someone who called Lee a "traitor," and John Kennedy chose Calhoun as one of the five greatest senators.

For a long time Americans North and South observed a truce. It was agreed that the war was a great tragedy with good and bad on both sides, from which a stronger and better country had emerged. In this scenario, Lincoln is the great martyred Peacemaker who would have "bound up the nation's wounds" and avoided the evils that followed the war. This is a dubious estimate of Lincoln, but one in which it was useful for all parties to believe.

Things have changed in the last few years. There is a concerted effort to banish the South into one dark little corner of American history labeled "slavery" and "treason." Here in the Lincoln bicentennial, we can note that there has been an accompanying literature that celebrates Lincoln not as the Peacemaker but as the great Hero of Democracy who was justified in using any means necessary to destroy evil (*i.e.*, kill recalcitrant Americans). This accompanies and justifies America's turn toward a mission to impose "global democracy" by unlimited force and preemptive war. Even General Sherman is once more

Clyde Wilson is a long-time contributing editor to Chronicles *and is guilty of many other offenses as well.*

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being celebrated as a great military hero for his ruthless campaigns against civilians. (There has been a countertrend, exemplified by Thomas DiLorenzo's and Ronald and Donald Kennedy's best-selling books as well as a number of solid monographs exploring the uglier aspects of Northern motives and actions in the war. If my e-mail correspondence from above the Potomac and the Ohio is any measure, a great many non-Southern Americans now regard Lincoln as the fount of the excessive centralization and imperial war-making under which we now live.)

During the Civil War centennial, Robert Penn Warren wrote a little book called *The Legacy of the Civil War*. He had some critical things to say about the tendency of his fellow Southerners to use the war as an excuse for their shortcomings. But for our purposes, what he had to say about the American majority is more pertinent. The *éclat* of having "saved the Union" and freed the slaves had left Northerners with "a Treasury of Virtue." This is the basis of a kind of plenary indulgence that automatically prejustifies the motives of American wars and the goodness inherent in America's acts to force the world into conformity with America's ideal version of herself.

The Treasury of Virtue renders Americans immune to simple truth. The war was one of conquest against other Americans. It was not a righteous crusade or a family spat. "Government of the people" would not have suffered if a war of coercion had not been launched against the Southern people. The opposite is true. The fundamental purpose of the war was to protect the prosperity of the ruling elements of the Northern states by keeping the South captive as a market and a source of raw materials and exports. The philanthropic Boston abolitionist Theodore Parker announced that war was being waged for the supremacy of "Northern industry." European observers took this for granted. The primary goal of the Republican Party was permanent installment of Hamilton's "blessings"—a national debt, a protected market for industrialists, and a collusion between bankers and politicians. Many Northerners said plainly that they wanted emancipation because "free labor" was cheaper and more disposable than "slave labor."

Orestes Brownson, a strong supporter of the Union, lamented that the war had been sustained not by patriotism but by patronage, profit, and a trumped-up hatred of Southerners. The last was exemplified by the bigotry and blasphemy of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and more than a few New England clergymen calling for the extermination of wicked Southerners. The Republican Party's war was accompanied and sustained by immense corruption. Americans seem to have persuaded themselves that the postwar corruption of "the Great Barbecue" somehow mysteriously erupted after Lincoln. No, it was a creation of the war for the "Union." At least one major military expedition was mounted to steal cotton to enrich Union commanders. Plunder of the government and the South made many of Lincoln's supporters wealthy. Lincoln himself encouraged various acts of corruption for political purposes if not for personal profit.

The Lincoln hagiography that is an essential part of the Treasury was a post-assassination creation. As one Southern wag put it, Lincoln had so many admirers when he was dead because he had none when he was living. When looked at coldly, the man Lincoln and his career contains much that is tawdry. The strongest supporters of his cause regarded him as incompetent and temporizing. The possibility cannot ever be dismissed that they were implicit in his assassination. One would think that the event would have received exhaustive investigation. Instead, the alleged conspirators were quickly and secretly seized and murdered by the Army. Confederates were not angels. Unlike their conquerors, they never claimed to be. But by comparison they shine with honor bright, something much of the world has sensed.

In the history books and in popular imagination Americans are in denial. They cling to their Treasury of Virtue—the belief that the war was waged with righteousness and philanthropic motives and in defense of "government of the people." Realities do not register. In the North, on the whim of an Army officer, people were dragged from their homes and held incommunicado in military prisons, without any formal charges or right of counsel, and with no set duration. Sometimes these people were guilty of nothing more than a "disloyal" word in private conversation, being the object of some anonymous spite, or even whistling the wrong tune. Overwhelmingly, the arrests were not for acts but for opinions. In the case of newspaper editors, they were held until they agreed either to dispose of their presses or refrain from further criticisms of the Lincoln administration. This "American Bastille" was more oppressive and unprecedented at the time than it seems now. Republican mobs were also active in punishing dissenters.

In Kentucky and Missouri and the early seized regions of Tennessee and Louisiana, occupation involved executing innocent civilian hostages, uprooting the population of extended regions, and imprisoning women wholesale. From the first step of the federal army across the Potomac, the people of the South were seen as fair game for looting and vandalism. (One Northern critic of the war wondered what law gave federal soldiers the right to steal Southern pianos, watches, and silver tableware.) This soon became systematic policy. Houses, barns, tools, livestock, stored food, standing crops, children's pets, schools, churches, convents, libraries—these were systematically destroyed, the houses usually being looted first. A Georgia lady recalled how Union officers' wives went through her home and divided up her furniture for shipment north. This policy was not directed just at wealthy planters, as some recent apologists have claimed, but at the entire population, white and black. Old men and blacks were tortured, and fresh graves, of which there were many in the South, despoiled to reveal the location of valuables. "Historians" on public television recently claimed that Sherman's depredations were limited to "military necessity"—despite his announced desire to make the women and children of the

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South howl in misery. Not to mention the bombardment of cities and the deliberate destruction of undefended cities that had already surrendered. As General Lee wrote, "These people delight to destroy the weak and those who can make no defense; it suits them."

Since the mid-20th century Americans have been obsessed with race, and it has become *de rigueur* to declare that the war was about slavery and nothing but slavery. Earlier generations knew better. Emancipation was a byproduct of the conquest of the South. The mass of the Northern public and army was far more antiblack than antislavery, and the destruction of the South was as hard on the black population as on the white. The notion that soldiers in blue and emancipated slaves rushed into each other's arms with shouts of Glory Hallelujah is pure fantasy. Ambrose Bierce, who fought for the Union the entire war, said the only emancipated slaves he saw were the concubines and servants of Union officers. He respected Southerners but had only contempt for the foreigners in his army.

Nor was slavery (domestic servitude) in 1860 at all the horror that it is now imagined to be. In 1860 in New York City there were women and children working 16-hour days for starvation wages; 150,000 unemployed; 40,000 homeless; 600 brothels (some with girls as young as 10); and 9,000 grog shops where the poor could temporarily drown their sorrows. Half of the children did not live past the age of five. Further, half of the free black people in the country were in the South and generally lived better than the despised free blacks of the North. One Southern Unionist testified to his belief that half of the black population of his state had perished in the deprivations and dislocations of invasion. In Louisiana free blacks pleaded in vain that their hard-won property not be destroyed. Federal soldiers had been told that no black people could own property in the South. New England shippers got rich in the illegal African slave trade to Cuba and Brazil right up to the war, and Bostonians owned slave sugar plantations in Cuba even after the war.

A Southern planter who reflected on the circumstances in which he had been born, observed everyday life around him, and examined his Christian conscience saw no reason to accept the hatred and abuse of strangers who claimed moral authority over him. The abuse had been going on for 30 years before the war and was a main cause of secession. A great man of the North, John Adams, had observed that the only distinction between the slaves of the South and the poorest workers of the North was in the label.

Secession should have been an occasion for constitutional negotiations such as the Confederate government sought, especially by a President whose position had the support of less than 40 percent of the people. Instead, Lincoln declared that the solemn, open, deliberative, democratic acts of the people of 11 states were merely "combinations" of criminals too numerous to be put down by the marshals. He supported his position by a false American history and the transparent lie that the "people" did not really support their states. On the day of Lincoln's inauguration, the Constitution died as a governing document. It became a mere rule of thumb for politicians and lawyers, who continue Lincoln's heritage of twisting it to suit their ends. After all, the Constitution defines treason against the United States as waging war against "them" (the states), not as resisting the federal government. Lincoln's very intent to coerce required that Southerners be deprived of citizenship and their states destroyed. It was Lincoln who was engaged in a rebellion to overthrow the Union. He had to dispense with the real Constitution because it disallowed not only a war of coercion against Americans but most of the acts of central power in favor of private profit that his party was determined to make permanent.

In fact, Lincoln's campaign to "retake the seditious states" could only rest on the tacit assumption that the Southern states, resources, and people were and always had been the property of the federal government—or more properly, of the politicians who had got control of the federal machine. And that the South existed not for herself as a self-governing part of America but for the benefit and disposition of the North. Consent of the people could only be given one time, and they were ever after bound to obey the federal machine. Thus, the primary principle of the Declaration, that governments rest on the consent of the governed, was abolished. A Northern critic of the war remarked, "If this war is right then the Revolution was wrong." The Union could not have been preserved under such assumptions, any more than a marriage can be properly preserved by battery.

Lincoln's pretty words in the Gettysburg Address managed to have it both ways—he was, he claimed, preserving the sacred old Union and at the same time promulgating a "new birth of freedom" that was somehow necessary to save government of the people. But these were not the arguments normally used by the spokesmen of his party to justify their war. They spoke instead of conquest and authority, of empire and punishment of disobedience, of the removal of obstructions to their designs. This is not a Southern accusation; it is the overwhelming evidence of their own words, both public and private, evidence refused by the American consciousness. Lincoln's icing has been mistaken for the cake. Karl Marx agreed enthusiastically with Lincoln's interpretation of the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming the war to be a rebellion of "slave drivers" against the "one great democratic republic whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man was issued." Marx, like many other supporters of Lincoln's war, also regarded it as a rebellion against progressive German immigrants who somehow were better Americans than the Southern sons of patriots and founders.

It is unlikely, but if Americans could ever come to recognize and admit how much counterfeit is contained in their Treasury of Virtue, they could have a more realistic view of themselves and play a more humble and responsible role in the world. They would realize that they are not above history or immune to sin. ◈

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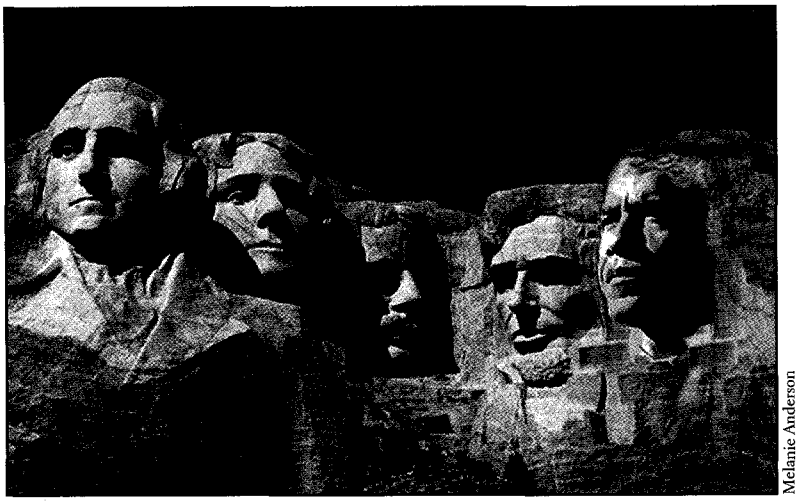
Obama as Lincoln

Mask and Mirror

by Justin Raimondo



Melanie Anderson

Ron English, the self-styled "Robin Hood of Madison Avenue" who specializes in "liberating" commercial billboards and defacing them (albeit artistically) with his anticapitalist messages, has painted a portrait of Obama as Lincoln: The President's thick lips, crinkled brow, and eyes sparkling with a preternatural intelligence are seamlessly merged with the high forehead, biblical beard, and absurd ears of the Great Emancipator. Obama-Lincoln looks out at us, almost but not quite grinning with the sweetness of his victory and the knowledge that so many, like Mr. English, view his election as their own personal emancipation from eight years of misery. Indeed, the Lincoln meme has gone viral, with references to the comparison ranging from the lowliest pajama-clad blogger to the esteemed editors of *Newsweek*. The latter declare that "It is the season to compare Barack Obama to Abraham Lincoln," and house hacks Evan Thomas and Richard Wolffe take it from there to paint a portrait of the multiculti messiah that has all the earmarks of a North Korean ode to the Dear Leader:

> Two thin men from rude beginnings, relatively new to Washington but wise to the world, bring the nation together to face a crisis. Both are superb rhetoricians, both geniuses at stagecraft and timing. Obama, like Lincoln and unlike most modern politicians, even writes his own speeches . . .

Two thin men? What normal person would make such a comparison? To our elites, thinness is a sign of moral virtue. Here is a President who goes to the gym every day and shoots hoops with the best of them: A penumbra of health radiates from his person like the glow of sanctity. Evans and Wolffe don't just acknowledge the cosmetic superficiality that got Obama elected: They celebrate it. According to *Newsweek*, Obama is the New Lincoln because both are thin, geniuses at stagecraft, and write a lot of their own material—a rationale that also makes Obama the New Michael Jackson.

The Lincolnian legacy was constantly reiterated by the Obamaites as they readied themselves for Inauguration Day, and "a new birth of freedom" is their theme song. As to what this freedom consists of, it depends on whom you ask. Obama is the perfect demagogue; his followers project their own hopes and desires onto the blankness of his expression.

Since we live in an age from which greatness has been banished, it's only natural for politicians, ideologues, and common demagogues to reach back into the past for models to serve as masks for their nostrums. Lincoln, the self-educated rail-splitting backwoods boy, born in a lean-to, who rose from nothing to become a larger-than-life figure in our history—Obama sees himself in our 16th president, as he admits in a 2005 essay in *Time*, and his cultists lap it up. It's pure Madison Avenue. As Peggy Noonan acerbically remarked,

> Barack Obama, the son of two University of Hawaii students, went to Columbia and Harvard Law after

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attending a private academy that taught the children of the Hawaiian royal family. He made his name in politics as an aggressive Chicago vote hustler in Bill Clinton's first campaign for the presidency.

You see the similarities.

Beyond the Stalinesque cult of personality promoted by the mainstream media, there is a real sense in which Obama's kinship with Lincoln, the politician, is all too apparent. The left's love affair with Obama will continue long after they realize that he's simply a shill for big business, just like Lincoln. Honest Abe was the perfect embodiment of Whiggish economic principles: subsidies for politically connected industries, starting with the banks but not ending there. With Lincoln, it was the railroads who collected government favors and tax dollars; in Obama's time, it will be the road builders. In both scenarios, the banks are showered with governmental largesse. Obama has often been likened to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as the shadow of a Second Great Depression looms ever larger, and yet Obama's New New Deal will no doubt resemble the corporate welfare state championed by Lincoln rather than the WPA-style work brigades romanticized by Obama's leftist supporters.

Lincoln abolished hard money, introduced the greenback, and laid the foundations of the seminationalized banking system that is presently crumbling all around us. Furthermore, Lincoln set up a tariff wall behind which the "trusts" were sheltered, and these monstrous economic institutions sprouted and flourished like rampant weeds, choking their economic and political competitors and effectively running the country. Think of the Great Emancipator as the host at a gigantic orgy of corporate welfare: Favored businesses were heavily subsidized—not just the banks but the railroads, which were lavished with land grants. The machinery of government loomed larger than ever before in America. At the heart of it beat that great engine of government-created inflation, the regulated central banks, to finance it all. Wherever Lincoln trod, the old free and independent spirit of American enterprise was stamped out: The Post Service was monopolized, the tax burden grew much heavier, and "sin" taxes were slapped on tobacco and whiskey.

Obama set about further centralizing and outright nationalizing the banking system before he even took office: He spoke in favor of the bank bailout and, together with John McCain, issued a statement that, in effect, gave the federal government a blank check to take whatever measures it deemed necessary, by administrative fiat, to shore up the collapsing walls of the Lincolnian central-banking edifice.

Taxation was the Great Emancipator's tool of choice in his effort to weld together a strong centralized mercantile state, and the tariff was a major aspect of his economic program. His nomination at the Republican National Convention over his better-known and more experienced rivals was made possible, in part, by the support of the key Pennsylvania delegation. As the center of the ailing iron and steel industry, Pennsylvania was angling for higher tariffs, import quotas, and other special privileges. One of Lincoln's first acts was to erect the highest tariff wall in our history, doubling tariff rates and later imposing import quotas.

Labor, a major Obamaite constituency, is already agitating for a higher tariff wall, and this fits right in with Obama's industrial economic policy, which will pick winners and losers in the marketplace—and protect corporate favorites in the name of "national security" and the "war against recession." While protesting that he wants to lift the tax burden on most of us, Obama has promised to push for a tax hike on the "wealthy"—if anyone is left who fits that description by the time he begins his term. And you can bet us nonwealthy types will be asked to make "sacrifices" for the good of the country, in the name of "unity"—as state and local governments hike tax rates to pay for his gigantic public-works program, another Lincolnian favorite.

For insight into Obama's Lincolnian character, *Newsweek* turned to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich—"a self-described 'student of Lincoln' and author of two [pretty awful] books on the Civil War":

> He has been impressed by Obama's use of Lincoln as a prop. But he is waiting to see if Obama is sincere in his emulation. "Obama's got a liberal voting record, and I don't know of any substantive issue where he's ever broken with his leadership," says Gingrich.

Yet the Republicans preempted any grand gesture of bipartisanship when McCain signed on to that joint endorsement of the bank bailout—and arguably threw the election to the Democrats, perhaps deliberately. A few weeks after the election, Chris Matthews opined on *Hardball* that if only McCain had opposed the bailout, the outcome might have been different. The Republicans, in short, never gave Obama the chance to "reach out" across the aisle, having broken with their stated principles of small government and fiscal responsibility long before the election.

Doris Kearns Goodwin has been all over the talking-heads circuit, babbling about the "team of rivals" that Obama-Lincoln has assembled, one that will "unite the country" in this time of crisis, which in no way resembles the Civil War, and her bromides have been wielded like a bludgeon in order to stamp out a possible rebellion by Obama's more sincere followers who are attracted to his ostensibly antiwar stance. The appointment of Hillary Clinton to head up the State Department is a hard pill for many of those followers to swallow, and they finally did so only at the particularly loud insistence of leftist bloggers and print-world opinionmongers, as well as their televised counterparts over at MSNBC. Even the news that

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Obama is reconsidering a specific timetable for withdrawal—oh, and that "residual force" we're leaving behind, just in case, will number as many as 70,000—did not phase them. There was not a peep out of the leftist-led "antiwar" brood, or the Hollywood liberals perched around Arianna Huffington and her faux-Drudge website.

With the prospect of the auto industry collapsing, and deflation easily outpacing the government's efforts to stem it, President Obama will have his hands full with domestic economic matters and will be excused by many "progressives" for ceding the foreign-policy realm to Hillary and her menagerie. Those whose preferred policy stance in the Middle East is stasis will have reason to celebrate, and the bipartisan group behind the push for confronting Iran will have a strong voice and a majority vote in the corridors of power. Of course, one vote—the President's—is all that's needed to launch an attack, but it's a thousand-and-one little decisions, usually made by subordinates, that pave the road to war.

Obama's identification with Lincoln is all tied up with the issue of race and the idea that an Obama presidency is somehow the fulfillment of the Lincolnian dream of a land where the descendant of slaves could attain the highest office in the land. But of course there is nothing Lincolnian about this dream: Setting aside the fact that Obama is not the descendant of slaves, we must acknowledge, as Obama does in his *Time* essay, that Lincoln himself did not believe in racial equality and even advocated sending African-Americans back to Africa. But no matter. Mythology is not amenable to fact-checkers. History can always be made to fit into the Procrustean bed of ideology.

In the Bizarro World in which we live, where up is down and the laws of nature and man are stood on their heads, Wall Street's victorious champion is hailed as a populist hero, even a "progressive." As unprecedented sums of money poured into his campaign coffers, from every corporate interest—with particular generosity shown by the bankers—Obama was hailed as the great egalitarian whose triumph would strike a blow for the ordinary man. He is the avatar of the new plutocracy, the perfect oreo—a creamy patrician center sandwiched in dark, crunchy populism.

Our time calls for real leaders, but what we are getting are manufactured heroes, draped in historical allusions and set up on a pedestal for us to worship. The priests of the Obama cult intone their prayers and burn incense at his altar, while the Remnant looks on, bemused and not a little frightened, hoping he will not do too much harm.

The potential is there, however, for very great damage. If Obama is ambitious, his advisors are even more so: They might fall into the trap of believing in Dear Leader's greatness, and their own. They might even come to believe in the Obama-as-Lincoln myth—in which case we are all in some very big trouble. Lincoln, after all, suspended *habeas corpus*, jailed his opponents, and closed down newspapers that displeased him. I was struck by the audacity of the *Time* article comparing Obama with Lincoln, in which "humility" was listed as one of our new President's many virtues. If one can say anything about the 44th President, it is surely that pride bordering on arrogance oozes from his every pore. He acted as if he were already President throughout his campaign: The swearing in, as far as he was concerned, was just a formality. Hubris—the abiding sin of mankind, and the flaw that has brought down more than one of Barack Obama's predecessors—promises to be the leitmotif of his administration. And pride, as we all know, is what goeth before destruction. ◁©▷

Icarus Fell From Heaven

by Joseph O'Brien

What derring-do did he ever dare refuse?
He always showed his brave side to father
And country. Do they, then, rashly abuse
Him who say his pride fell altogether
That day he decided to see the sights
Of heaven, a gold-feathered parvenu?
It was a family business, his by rights,
To rise or fall at full market value.

Of course he gave the gods first chance to bid,
Sold them on waxy pinions, the long span
That could match speed and style with any god
And wits and pride with any son of man—
A shame he burned his brief divinity
Showing off his upward mobility.

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Lincolnism Today

The Long Marriage of Centralized Power and Concentrated Wealth

by Daniel Larison

In the Anglo-American experience, the partisans of concentrated wealth and advocates for political centralization have long been connected. Over the last three centuries, that connection has grown stronger, and in the United States this process accelerated dramatically during and after the Lincoln administration. Lincolnism, the idea that the central state can and should use its coercive apparatus to serve the narrow interests of an economic elite at the expense of the commonwealth, prevailed decisively in the War of Secession and during the decades that followed, with high tariffs, railroad subsidies, and the apportionment of public lands. Times have changed and so, too, have the specific policies that Lincolnists champion. But their basic goal remains the same, and the interests being served by Lincolnism over the years are remarkably similar in kind to those championed by Lincoln himself. In the end, Lincolnism is essentially a form of state capitalism, which Clyde Wilson has defined as "a regime of highly concentrated private ownership, subsidized and protected by government."

Most of the commentary and reporting on the federal government's financial-sector interventions remarked on the supposed irony of a "pro-market" administration embracing an expansive role for government in response to the crisis, but throughout its tenure the Bush White House consistently geared its policies and regulations to suit large financial firms. Adopting costly measures to socialize the risk of lending institutions and shore up large, overleveraged banks at public expense, the Bush administration stayed faithful to its state-capitalist roots, shaping policy according to the particular interests of major corporations and the financial industry. With the bailout, the confusion of public and private interests can be said to have reached a new level, but the cooperative relationship between Washington and Wall Street did not fundamentally change—it merely intensified.

Economic centralization and consolidated power are thriving in the wake of the financial crisis, as both tend to increase when the public is panicked and willing to cede more power and control to the very institutions that have already egregiously abused what power they previously possessed. Opponents of the bailout were fragmented and easily cowed by market turmoil. No common set of principles or objections animated the odd right-left alliance of convenience that voted against the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, and the slightest pressure was sufficient to break the limited resistance of many House members to the bill. Paradoxically, many of the opponents of the largest Wall Street bailout came from the party of Lincoln. In a rare moment of clarity, even if they lacked the language to describe it, a majority of House Republicans recognized that state capitalism and the free market were in conflict and that the interests their party leaders served truly had no connection to their purported principles.

There is scarcely any coherent opposition to the collusion of government and what Lord Bolingbroke and Jefferson identified as "the moneyed interest." They were referring to the combination of financial and commercial power that found its political defenders among the Whigs of both Britain and America. Today, the moneyed interest enjoys the support of the leadership of both U.S. political parties. Those who expect anything different from the newly inaugurated protégé of George Soros and Warren Buffett are bound to be disappointed. Nor is there much more awareness of the severe dependency to which government policy, past and present, has reduced American citizens and which will facilitate ever-greater consolidation in the future. One of the crucial reasons for this lack of awareness is a general loss of understanding of the relationship between economic and political independence. Most Americans believe that they are enjoying economic liberty when they yoke themselves to increasingly large-scale firms.

Over 40 years ago, Canadian philosopher George Grant said that American conservatives must oppose economic centralization if they seriously hope to pursue political decentralization. The opposing tradition, the Country tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries, always held that this alliance of wealth and government has been antithetical to political and economic liberty as well as to the proper functioning of constitutional government. That tradition also held that permitting this collusion privileged the interests of a relative few with access and ties to the centers of power. When Jackson fought the Bank and other Southerners later declared their fear of "bank rule," they were opposing the same sort of collusion in another form.

Over the last few months, we have become all too familiar with the phrase "too big to fail," which acknowl-

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edges that economic centralization on such a large scale, whose efficiency and virtues we have heard praised for decades, represents a grave threat to the health of the national economy during a normal correction. Having become dependent on a few large institutions, we are told that we must prop up the same institutions and trust the same government that singularly failed the public. Instead of seeing the necessity of more broadly distributing wealth and power, Lincolnists insist that the collusion that helped create the current crisis must be deepened rather than abandoned.

It is perhaps fitting that the only other man elected president from Illinois has already embraced many of the tenets of Lincolnism. Barack Obama's attempt to connect himself to Abraham Lincoln goes well beyond his publicity stunt of announcing his candidacy at the statehouse in Springfield. Obama, like many of his predecessors, embraces state capitalism, which is why so many of his early appointments have won praise for their "centrism" and "pragmatism." From what we can gather so far, Obama's Treasury Department is likely to be even more active in intervening in the financial sector. As head of the New York Federal Reserve, Obama's nominee for treasury secretary, Tim Geithner, endorsed each of Secretary Henry Paulson's and Chairman Ben Bernanke's bailout decisions, and Obama himself supported the bailout legislation in the early fall. One of the consequences of the bailout debate in the months since the financial crisis became particularly acute has been that the Democratic Party, already reconciled to financial interests during the Clinton years, has become even more closely allied to Wall Street.

Given Obama's appointments and his own record, it's a safe bet that the Obama administration will be as wedded to Lincolnism as the past three administrations. Though his top nominee for U.S. trade representative, Xavier Becerra, is known for having second thoughts on his support for NAFTA, President Obama is not going to renegotiate NAFTA in any significant way, and he will likely attempt to resurrect the Doha round of international trade talks. As the global recession unfolds, we can expect Obama to modify and institutionalize the *ad hoc* G-20 coordination of economic policy that began at the tail end of 2008, and we will see an attempt to use existing international institutions to secure the interests of multinational corporations. An ambitious internationalist such as Obama will pursue a more coordinated global state capitalism, building on the example that the WTO has already provided and spreading Lincolnism worldwide.

In his April 2007 Chicago Global Affairs Council speech, Obama famously said that the security of the United States is inextricably tied to the security of every other nation; practically speaking, this was a theoretical justification for intervention everywhere. Obama's statement also revealed his view of international relations in terms of extensive interdependence. With respect to economic policy, this special emphasis on interdependence implies that his administration may push for coordinated, transnational mechanisms for bailing out failing multinational firms. As we become more and more dependent on foreign investors to buy our debt, we may be told by future administrations that stabilizing vulnerable European or Chinese or other foreign financial sectors will be necessary to the functioning of our own economy.

Lincolnism's corporate-government alliances also create incentives for firms with vested interests in foreign and domestic government contracts to support policies that promise to bring them additional business. The most straightforward example of the state taking on additional, unnecessary risks to "open new markets" is the ongoing push for NATO expansion ever eastward for the benefit of defense contractors. Corporate-government alliances also create opportunities for the government to co-opt corporations in the name of national security, which we have seen most recently in the use of telecommunications companies to conduct illegal surveillance operations and the subsequent granting of immunity to the firms that helped the government break the law.

Healthy republican government and Lincolnism are entirely incompatible. Through its support for concentrated wealth, Lincolnism establishes an oligarchy that dominates the polity, whether formally or informally, and makes self-government impossible. Classical republicanism requires the subordination of private interests to the good of the commonwealth. A republic must not become captive to one faction, whereas it is advantageous to both state and private factions to reduce citizens to dependency on one or both. For all of Lincoln's misleading rhetoric of preserving "government by the people," Lincolnism has always meant the rule of the few who are qualified primarily by their wealth and proximity to power. It is natural, then, that such an oligarchic, state-capitalist system fears above all things the mobilization of a populist protest against its misrule and usurpations. This fear acknowledges the basic illegitimacy and misrepresentation at the heart of the entire enterprise, which is vulnerable to losing all credibility once critics begin to probe beneath the surface.

Lincolnism today is the attempt to maintain the antithesis of the Country tradition, that of the Court, in a country whose people are still somewhat attached to the ideals of Jeffersonian republicanism insofar as they believe that they, and not the princes of Washington and New York, ultimately control their government. The good news for populists is that the Wall Street bailout was such an obvious and transparent swindle that many more citizens have become suspicious of the federal government's exploitations of crisis and invocations of emergency powers. The instinctive revulsion of at least a plurality of the people at the prospect of the bailout suggests a healthy level of distrust of both government and corporate leaders. Lincolnists consistently frame government giveaways and gifts to private interests as vital for the national interest and the common good. In so doing, they conceal the antirepublican character of the ideology of the first Republican president. ◁

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The Financial Crisis

How It Happened, and Why It Is Still Happening

by William J. Quirk

"Stock-jobbers will become the praetorian guard of the government, at once its tool and its tyrant, bribed by its largesses and overawing it by clamours and combinations," wrote James Madison in 1791. He and Thomas Jefferson both knew that Alexander Hamilton's debt and financing policies would ultimately undermine the victory for democracy won in the American Revolution. And they were right: 75 percent of the American people opposed the recent bailout of the U.S. financial sector, yet that did nothing to stop Washington from committing eight trillion taxpayer dollars to finance purchases, loans, and guarantees, of which the people's elected representatives in Congress have approved only $700 billion. The Federal Reserve simply said it had the authority to issue the other $7.3 trillion and could make a plausible technical argument to back up its claim. No matter: Since Congress is not in control of the bailout, it lacks democratic legitimacy. "We can't keep doing this," Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke said to Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson in mid-September. "Both because we at the Fed don't have the necessary resources and for reasons of democratic legitimacy, it's important that Congress come in and take control of the situation." But given the public's opposition, Congress was not willing to take control, and Paulson and Bernanke went ahead on their own. They effectively nationalized the U.S. financial system. As socialism took hold of the country, Congress watched from the sidelines.

If government action is not based on law, it is just the exercise of raw power. The Federal Reserve's authority to "rescue" Bear Stearns was questioned by its former chairman, Paul Volcker. Later, after the Fed refused to "rescue" Lehman Brothers, Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research said, "They've been doing things of dubious legal authority all year. Who would have sued them?"

An arrogant lack of respect for the law precipitated the financial crisis. In the early days of the crisis, the *New York Times* reported that it was impossible to tell even "who owes what to whom." That is an accurate description of the world created by the exotic new instruments known as "derivatives"—Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDOs) and Credit Default Swaps (CDSs). Larry Summers is head of President Obama's White House National Economic Council. In July 1998, as deputy treasury secretary, he explained to Congress that the derivative market "in just a few short years" had become "highly lucrative" and a "magnet for derivative business from around the world." The market, Summers continued, is developed "on the basis of complex and fragile legal and legislative understandings." It was true, he added, that "questions have been raised as to whether the derivatives market could exacerbate a large, sudden market decline." Summers didn't think so, noting that the derivatives supported "higher investment and growth in living standards in the United States and around the world." Moreover, there was no reason for concern, since

> the parties to these kinds of contract are largely sophisticated financial institutions that would appear to be eminently capable of protecting themselves from fraud and counterparty insolvencies and most of which are already subject to basic safety and soundness regulation under existing banking and securities laws.

Summers explained that the market was based on an "implicit consensus that the OTC derivatives market should be allowed to grow and evolve without deciding" the legal issues—*i.e.*, whether derivatives violated laws prohibiting gambling and trading in unregistered securities, not to mention doing so outside the regulated options exchange. "At the heart of that consensus has been a recognition that 'swap' transactions should not be regulated . . . whether or not a plausible legal argument could be made" that the contracts are "illegal and unenforceable." The $90-trillion derivatives market, according to Summers, was based not on law, but on "understandings" and an "implied consensus." Summers never explained how the exotic devices would be of any help to the real economy or why the market needed secrecy to operate.

It is now crystal clear that our elected and appointed officials did not understand what derivatives were or the damage they had done. Two months into the crisis, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, formerly CEO of Goldman-Sachs, announced that the original remedy he had sold to Congress—buying up the rotten assets—was be-

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ing abandoned, and the treasury would now inject capital directly into the banks. In late November, the treasury came up with a plan to rescue Citigroup. Congress called it a bait-and-switch—which it was—but the real problem is that you can't fashion a remedy if you're not able or willing to say what the problem is. The public knew that it did not understand—the sums were unimaginable, the vocabulary exotic, and even the purpose of the game obscure. There are two crises: One is the "troubled asset" crisis, caused by subprime mortgages. That problem is finite and should be fairly easy to solve: Either let the losses fall where they may or guarantee the bad mortgages. But amazingly, the total losses from the crisis far exceed the bad mortgages, which brings us to the second crisis—the derivative crisis where "sophisticated" parties bet on anything. Would a bond or loan default? Would a company fail? Loaning money to gamblers is never a good idea, and in this case, the lenders were major U.S. banks, which are now bankrupt.

Total U.S. debt, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nearly doubled between 1980 and 2007. Financial-sector debt, however, rocketed from 21 percent of GDP in 1980 to 83 percent in 2000, then on up to 116 percent in 2007. A large part of the financial-sector debt was in the form of securities backed by mortgages and other debt—a practice begun in the 1980's to evade the capital requirements imposed by law. "Securitization" also created instruments that few could understand. Indeed, the rights and liabilities of the parties to such arrangements are so unclear that, when Bank of America recently promised to reduce 400,000 of its mortgages to prevent foreclosures, it was sued in a class action by an investor in the mortgage securities who pointed out that the mortgages were no longer owned by Bank of America, but by a trust that had bought them in the process of securitization.

Capital requirements are a basic safeguard that limits the loans a bank can make to some multiple of its reserved capital. "Securitization" evades the requirement, turning the bank into a loan originator. The problem is that the originator has a limited interest in the creditworthiness of the borrower, since it is passing the loan along to the buyer of the security. That caused a lot of trouble.

The technical definition of a "derivative" is something that derives its value from something else. A stock or bond is a thing itself, whereas an option to buy a stock at a date and price in the future is a derivative. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that a whopping $72 billion in Credit Default Swaps "had been bet on Lehman's success or failure." This was nothing but high-stakes gambling on the part of our major investment banks. Two months into the crisis, all of them were gone. (Goldman-Sachs and Morgan Stanley had turned themselves into commercial banks so they could borrow from the Fed.)

It is not wise to invest in anything you don't understand, and very few understood these exotic instruments. Derivatives are designed to allow betting on any outcome while avoiding state gambling laws, on the one hand, and insurance laws (which require regulation and reserves), on the other. The effort to disguise what CDSs and CDOs really are has complicated matters. Insurance is illegal wagering in this country unless one has an "insurable interest." Thus, you can buy fire insurance on your house. Similarly, if you own a mortgage-backed security, you might want to insure against the risk of default. The buyer in some Credit Default Swaps owned the underlying security. In most, though, he did not: He was simply betting the security would default. Most CDSs, therefore, violated state antigaming laws. In both swaps and options, a small down payment brings a big exposure to movements in the capital markets. Financial markets became casinos. Gamers could bet on anything—whether interest rates were going up or down; whether a security would pay off; whether Bear Stearns or Lehman would fail. That last wager was particularly interesting because the bettor could influence the outcome by short selling or denying credit to Bear Stearns or Lehman. He could try to fix the race.

There is no doubt that the Wall Street speculators, and their legal advisors, with their derivatives—and with the complicity of government regulators, particularly the Federal Reserve and the SEC—have brought the house down. "Right now, the U.S. economy is contracting very rapidly. We are looking at a period of global slowdown," said John Thain, chairman of Merrill Lynch, on November 11, 2008. "This is not like 1987 or 1998 or 2001; the contraction going on is bigger than that. We will in fact look back to the 1929 period to see the kind of slowdown we are seeing now." By late November, $8.3 trillion of stock-market wealth had been erased. Worldwide, $23 trillion, or 38 percent of the wealth of all the world's companies, was gone. Consumer spending had slammed to a halt. Sales of new vehicles dropped 32 percent in the third quarter of 2008. The Big Three carmakers announced they would soon be bankrupt. Over just three days in late November, Citigroup lost 75 percent of its market value. Economists predicted a savings rate of three percent, which means that consumer spending will drop by one percent next year, the greatest drop since 1942. In 1942, the country was at war, and there was nothing to buy. The stock market fell 46 percent from its all-time high from October 2007 to October 2008, according to the Standard & Poor's 500 Index. Harvard Law Prof. Elizabeth Warren, head of a congressional oversight panel set up in the $700-billion bailout bill, announced on December 1 that she could discern no "coherent plan" for the bailout.

Secretary Paulson wrote in the *New York Times* on November 18 that he's "always said the decline in the housing market is at the root of the economic downturn and our financial market stress." But since when does a downturn in one sector of the economy bring down the house? What was different about this burst bubble? In *The Great Crash, 1929*, John Kenneth Galbraith wrote that "The singular feature of the Great Crash of 1929 was that the worst continued to worsen." In 2008, the complex interlock-

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ing derivatives kept unraveling as the worst continued to worsen. Wall Street, in Michael Lewis's phrase, "had created a Doomsday machine."

Before the crisis hit, Citigroup had become the leading issuer and holder of Collateralized Debt Obligations—securities that bundled mortgages and other debt (including credit-card receivables) into packages for resale to investor-gamblers. In 2007, Citigroup was the number-one issuer of CDOs—$49.2 billion out of a total issuance of $442.3 billion. Citi also held large quantities of them for its own account. John C. Dugan, head of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, notes that "what most differentiates the companies sustaining the biggest losses from the rest was their willingness to hold exceptionally large positions [in CDOs] on their balance sheets which, in turn, led to exceptionally large losses." Bankruptcy may be the only way to keep Citigroup in American hands—it is so desperate for cash that it is likely to sell a controlling interest for a song to any Saudi prince who happens to be in the neighborhood. In November 2006, Citigroup promised to pay the New York Mets $20 million per year for the next 20 years for the naming rights to the Mets' new ballpark—CitiField. Maybe the Mets will let Citi out of the contract. (Who wants to be associated with a busted bank?)

The bailout was said to be necessary to stabilize the U.S. financial system after its worst crash since the 1930's. We were on the edge of a cliff. If the federal government did not rescue it, the system would collapse. There would be no credit available for ordinary business purposes; people could not buy cars, and grass would grow in the streets. On Thursday, September 18, Paulson and Bernanke met with congressional leaders to present the bailout bill. At that meeting, Bernanke stated, "If we don't do this, we may not have an economy on Monday." The public's disdain for the bailout was understandable, since Washington never explained exactly where the losses would fall if we did nothing—and who would benefit if we did something. That would have meant confessing that there had been a lot of gambling going on, and the leadership thought it best that the winners be paid in full. The public would have been outraged.

In a stunning surprise, the House of Representatives rejected the bailout on Monday, September 29, by a vote of 228-205. The press heaped abuse on the House majority. The *New York Times*' David Brooks called the House vote "the revolt of the nihilists." The House had "exacerbated the global psychological freefall." Now, he concluded, "we have a crisis of political authority on top of the crisis of financial authority." A few days later the Bush administration added $150 billion of pure pork to get the bailout passed.

What if the White House had seriously encouraged all parties to the Credit Default Swaps to settle their contracts peaceably without taking undue advantage of other parties? And if that didn't work, what if they had forced creditors—including CDS counterparties—to accept a restructuring plan with some debt forgiveness and possibly a conversion of debt to equity? Derivative contracts, at the Lehman bankruptcy, were settled without much problem.

The whiff of democracy, however, discouraged Chairman Bernanke and Secretary Paulson from seeking any more "democratic legitimacy." The bailout leaders decided they would not go back to Congress. President Bush, while talking incessantly of free enterprise—and with Congress too smart to share the blame—nationalized the country's financial system. Sen. Jim Bunning (R-KY) told Chairman Bernanke that when he picked up his newspaper, "I thought I woke up in France." But no: "It turned out it was socialism here in the United States of America."

In July 2008, Merrill Lynch sold $31 billion in mortgage-backed securities for 22 cents on the dollar. Where did the taxpayers' dollars go? Our government, in some cases, won't tell us. The Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department refuse to identify the recipients of two trillion dollars in emergency loans. Bloomberg News made a FOIA request, which the Fed and Treasury denied; Bloomberg sued on November 7.

In one case we do know where the dollars went. AIG had effectively written insurance (CDSs) without reserves. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that AIG "was almost entirely a seller of CDSs." By selling credit protection on mortgage-backed securities, AIG was making "a big bet on housing." If AIG could not meet its obligations, why was that a public problem? "Meanwhile," the *Journal* sarcastically reports, "the search continues for the major counterparty that would have been destroyed by AIG's collapse." The public money—$170 billion—financed lavish parties, collateral on AIG's CDS commitments, and, best of all, a lawsuit against the IRS for $320 million to get back taxes the IRS was claiming AIG owed for "disallowance of foreign tax credits associated with cross-border financing transactions."

The crisis was caused by the failure to understand the potential for destruction in the growth and development of derivatives. Usually the bettor was only after a small margin—like playing the favorite in the sixth race to show. But to win anything substantial with such a bet, the gambler has to bet an awful lot, which could be lost. But if investment bankers wanted to bet on whether interest rates would go up, or whether Lehman or mortgage-backed securities would fail, so what? The problem is that the banks were willing to finance the gambling with vast loans.

Derivatives brought down Barings Bank in 1995 and Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM) in 1998. Barings Bank had helped President Jefferson finance the Louisiana Purchase in 1802. Its 1995 collapse was caused by one Singapore trader doubling down on consistently losing currency bets. Did the board of the Barings Bank know what a "derivative" was or that their agent was gambling the bank's existence? Of course not.

Long-Term Capital Management, a hedge fund led by Nobel Prize winners and other very bright people, was formed in 1994. They were so smart they did not believe

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John Maynard Keynes when he said, "The market can stay irrational longer than you can stay solvent." That was a mistake. At its peak, LTCM had $100 million in assets and faced $1 trillion of exposure because of derivative contracts. In 1998, Russia defaulted on her bonds, and LTCM was bust. The Federal Reserve orchestrated a complicated rescue involving 14 banks. Chairman Greenspan later explained that the Fed's intervention was itself a gamble since such a move might encourage future risk taking by investors: "To be sure, some moral hazard, however slight, may have been created by the Federal Reserve involvement," but the negatives were outweighed by the risk of "serious distortions to market prices had Long-Term been pushed suddenly into bankruptcy."

In 1999, there was somewhere between $65 trillion and $90 trillion in derivatives outstanding. The comptroller of the currency reported that, at the end of the third quarter of 2004, U.S. banks held $84 trillion of outstanding derivatives. On February 16, 2005, the *Financial Times* reported that the largest five "U.S. banks hold 95 percent of the total stock of derivatives." What in the world were they doing with those derivatives?

By July 8, 2008, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two so-called government-sponsored entities, were holding about five trillion dollars' worth of subprime mortgages. They had issued $5.2 trillion of debt for which—it was said—the government had an "implied" obligation. Treasury Secretary Paulson, on September 7, announced that Freddie and Fannie were now a "conservatorship" of the government, which, in one fell swoop, added five trillion dollars to the national debt. Earlier efforts—some by Sen. John McCain—to bring the agencies under control had been defeated by their two main congressional allies, Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA). Both of these men became powerful players in designing the cure for the problem they had created.

In his congressional testimony in October, former Chairman Greenspan admitted, "Free markets did break down. And I think that, as I said, shocked me. I still do not fully understand why it happened. And obviously to the extent that I figure out where it happened and why, it will change my views." President Bush's initial explanations of what had happened sounded wooden—as if he were a hostage reading a text prepared by his captors. But by November 13, he was more confident: "The crisis was not a failure of the free market system and the answer is not to reinvent the system." What, then, had caused it? He must have thought the problem was too much regulation: "We must recognize that government intervention is not a cure-all. History has shown that the greater threat to economic prosperity is not too little government involvement in the market, but too much." But if too much government intervention was the problem, then the solution should be less of it, not more. The solution, if the President is right, is to let the losses fall where they will.

On October 1, Barack Obama told the Senate that "now is not the time to argue about how the fire got started . . . now is the time for us to come together and put out that fire." But if you don't know what kind of fire it is, how will you know how to put it out? Despite your good intentions, you may wind up fanning the flames. A solution has to be based on a correct diagnosis of the problem. If the problem, for example, was too much easy money, a solution based on more easy money is not plausible. The Bush administration's eight trillion dollars and President Obama's stimulus plan are both based on the same theory—or hope—that more easy money will restore confidence and make prices rise.

Former Chairman Greenspan was not questioned on the development of derivatives and their potential for destruction because neither Congress nor the people in general understood their complexity and interlocking relationships. In 1932, the banks ruined millions of families and businesses when "runs on the bank" destroyed perfectly healthy institutions. The requirement of deposit insurance of $10,000 per account solved that problem, so runs did not again threaten the economy. The insurance protected against a liquidity crisis but not, of course, against insolvency caused by derivatives and bizarre loans. In the 1930's it took eight years and our productive industry in World War II to replace the wealth destroyed by the bank failures.

The Glass-Steagall Act, passed in 1933, was based on the idea that greed was too strong to be regulated. But it could be isolated—sealed off from the banking system. Banking had a public purpose—it was essential to the working of a capitalist system. Glass-Steagall said deposit-taking banks had to stay out of any other business—essentially functioning as utilities. The Glass-Steagall barriers worked. As long as they lasted, the country had no serious commercial bank failures.

Between 1929 and 1932, 4,015 banks had failed. The depositors lost their money, and the Great Depression deepened. Commercial banks, such as Chase National Bank, had created entities known as investment affiliates to sell foreign bonds and other worthless securities to the public. The investment affiliates paid fabulous salaries. Charlie Mitchell of National City Bank, who earned $100,000 from his own bank, was paid $3,000,000 by its investment affiliate. The affiliates, explained Sen. Carter Glass (D-VA), "were the most unscrupulous contributors, next to the debauch of the New York Stock Exchange; to the financial catastrophe which visited this country and was mainly responsible for the depression under which we have been suffering since." Senator Glass proposed a bill that would prohibit "the use of Federal Reserve banking facilities for stock gambling purposes." True, many people called it "stock investment," but Senator Glass disagreed. "It is nothing in the world but pure gambling just as much as that at Monte Carlo."

On May 20, 1933, Rep. Henry Steagall (D-AL) introduced the House version of the legislation, noting "it is useless to censure or to attempt to trace the blame. It is enough to know that neither our financial nor our offi-

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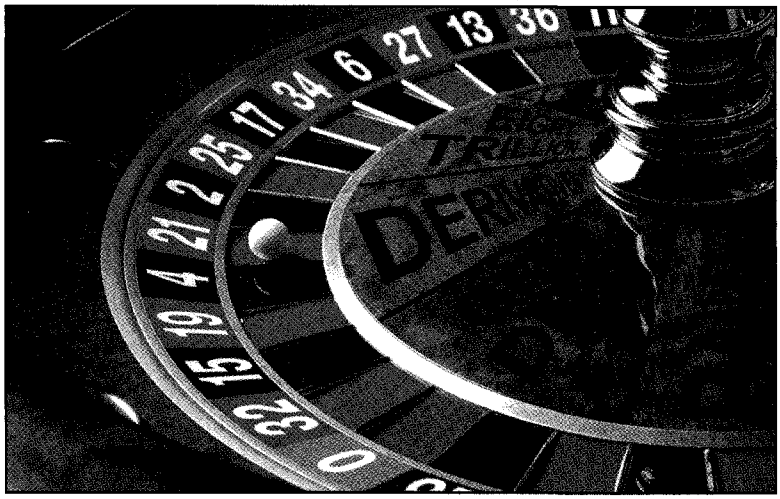
cial leadership furnished the discernment and courage to avert theses unhappy developments":

> But we seemed to forget the lessons of experience. We departed from sound bank principles. Our great banking system was diverted from its original purposes into investment activities and its services devoted to speculation and international high finance. Our financial leaders went on a spree. They cranked up our great financial machine, charged it with high-powered gas, and soared away toward the heavens forgetting that there would ever be need for a place to land or that a wreck awaited them . . . Values were lifted to fictitious levels.



Melanie Anderson

Not only had leaders in the banking industry been "forgetful and neglectful of their responsibilities," but "they have forgotten their own best interests." Representative Koppleman supported the bill, saying "the unholy alliance between the brokerage office and the banks must be broken." The chief reason for the lack of confidence in the bankers, he continued, was the feeling that the bankers had "personal financial gain at heart." Instead of working for their depositors' interests, "they were silently working for their own interests. No amount of exhortation will restore confidence in the American banking system." Legal barriers were necessary.

Rep. Hamilton Fish (R-NY) noted that "There was nothing new about this depression as far as the principle involved."

> It was exactly the same as any other: There was an enormous inflation brought about because of the mass overproduction of stocks, bonds, and other securities largely emanating from these affiliates. The overproduction of securities meant a mass overproduction of commodities, real estate, and everything else.

The Glass-Steagall Act mandated a new structure separating investment banks from commercial banks, thereby securing depositors' savings against the risk of being used for speculation. However, since the government was subsidizing the banking business with deposit insurance, it imposed regulations to make failures unlikely. Bank lending was basically limited to safe commercial loans. Bankers were not supposed to be clever. In 1974, Henry Harfield, of the New York law firm of Shearman and Sterling, counsel to the First National City Bank, told a meeting of young lawyers, "Just remember this: if bankers were as smart as you are, you would starve to death." Investment banks, on the other hand, were strictly on their own—they were free to be as smart as they could be, to speculate as they wished and make or lose money as they wished. But taxpayers did not expect to share the profits and, of course, did not dream they would share the losses. Commercial banks took in deposits and were compensated in the form of interest and, to a lesser extent, origination and other fees. Investment banks, on the other hand, did not have vast capital; they provided advisory and knowledge-based services, and their compensation was contingent upon results.

Between 1995 and 2000, the great investment banks all changed from partnerships to corporations. The former partners, now corporate officers, could still take off most of the profits by way of compensation "packages," but now the risk of loss was on the stockholders. This change made the crisis possible. The insiders managed to separate the profits—which they largely retained—from the losses, which now would fall elsewhere. It was similar to "securitization," where the insiders took the lucrative origination fees and sold the debt as a security—with the risk falling on a distant investor.

Glass-Steagall, of course, was an American law governing banks doing business here. It did not cover hedge funds, which are a worldwide, post-1987 phenomenon. It did not cover European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Australian, and Canadian banks and financial institutions unless they wanted to do business here. All of them were vital contributors to the crash.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton signed the "Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999"—the repeal of Glass-Steagall. In Congress, the effort was bipartisan—it passed the Senate 90-8. Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND), although he knew the bill would pass, spoke against it:

> For those who have a vision of re-landscaping the financial system in this country with different parts operating with each other in different ways and saying that represents modernization, then I am just hopelessly old fashioned, and there is probably nothing that can be said or done that will march me towards the future. . . .
>
> Does anybody here think this makes any sense, that we have banks involved in derivatives, trading on their own proprietary accounts? Does anybody think it makes any sense to have hedge funds out there with trillions of dollars of derivatives, losing billions of dollars and then being bailed out by a

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Federal Reserve-led bailout because their failure would be so catastrophic to the rest of the market that we cannot allow them to fail?

The bill, Senator Dorgan continued, had been heavily lobbied ($300 million was mentioned):

I, obviously, am in a minority here. We have people who dressed in their best suits and they just think this is the greatest piece of legislation that has ever been given to Congress. We have choruses of folks standing outside this Chamber who spent their lifetimes working to get this done, to say: Would you just forget all that nonsense back in the 1930s about bank failures and Glass-Steagall and the requirement to separate risk from banking enterprises; just forget all that. Time has moved on. Let's understand that. Change with the times.

Dorgan had no doubt that, before too long, the chickens would come home to roost:

I will bet one day somebody is going to look back at this and they are going to say: How on Earth could we have thought it made sense to allow the banking industry to concentrate, through merger and acquisition, to become bigger and bigger and bigger; far more firms in the category of too big to fail? How did we think that was going to help this country? Then to decide we shall fuse it with inherently risky enterprises, how did we think that was going to avoid the lessons of the past?

Republicans wanted to repeal Glass-Steagall because they thought it was hindering economic growth by limiting freedom and competition. Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX), chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, praised the bill at its signing:

In the 1930s, at the trough of the Depression, when Glass-Steagall became law, it was believed that government was the answer. It was believed that stability and growth came from government overriding the functioning of free markets. We are here today to repeal Glass-Steagall because we have learned that government is not the answer. We have learned that freedom and competition are the answers. We have learned that we promote economic growth and we promote stability by having competition and freedom.

The moment, said President Clinton, was "truly historic":

So what you see here, I think, is the most important recent example of our efforts here in Washington to maximize the possibilities of the new information-age global economy, while preserving our responsibilities to protect ordinary citizens . . .

It is true that the Glass-Steagall law is no longer appropriate for the economy in which we live. It worked pretty well for the industrial economy, which was highly localized, much more centralized, and much more nationalized than the one in which we operate today. But the world is very different.

Democrats and Republicans were in a self-congratulatory mood. President Clinton hailed them:

So I think you should all be exceedingly proud of yourselves, including being proud of your differences and how you tried to reconcile them. Over the past 7 years, we've tried to modernize the economy, and today what we're doing is modernizing the financial services industry, tearing down these antiquated walls, and granting banks significant new authority.

In order to kill Glass-Steagall, Democrats enlisted the banks to perform social functions that, in normal societies, are performed by government rather than private parties. The banks would only get their new powers if they agreed to meet the "credit needs . . . of low and moderate income communities." And the Republicans signed on. So, in addition to massive deregulation, private banks were strong-armed into becoming welfare agencies, laying the groundwork for the subprime mortgage spree.

Before the repeal of Glass-Steagall, large capital's disrespect for the law was astonishing. In 1998, Citigroup merged with Travelers Insurance in bold defiance of Glass-Steagall. Yet the Federal Reserve approved the merger. In so doing, the Fed bizarrely declared that the new entity would have to divest the illegal businesses if the law was not changed within five years. Ordinary crooks, if caught, have to go to jail and don't get the option to try to get the law changed. Within one year, Glass-Steagall was repealed, Larry Summers had become treasury secretary, and his predecessor, Robert Rubin, had joined Citigroup. The illegal company became legal. In late November 2008, Citigroup became the largest victim of its victory. Rubin had received $115 million in compensation, but the bank was bust. Citigroup had raised $75 billion from sovereign-wealth funds and the U.S. government to cover its losses, but it needed between $50 and $100 billion to cover further losses over the next 18 months. The bank failed because it did exactly what Glass-Steagall would have prevented: It traded for its own account as if it were an investment-banking partnership.

"I made a mistake," said former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan on October 23, "in presuming that the self-interest of organizations, specifically banks and others, were such as that they were best capable of protecting their own shareholders and the equity in the firms." As long as we have had capitalism, we've had bubbles: the South Seas Bubble, the Tulip Mania, the 1929 stock market, the dot-com bubble of 2000, and so on. Clearly, self-interest

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is not a safeguard.

Could state criminal laws against gambling have broken up the derivatives game? Without doubt, the "synthetic" Credit Default Swaps (in which the buyer did not own the underlying security) were pure gambling and violated state antigaming laws. Wasn't the $90—trillion derivatives market illegal? It was, until the waning hours of the Clinton administration, with a lame duck President and a lame duck Congress and a moral atmosphere conducive to a Marc Rich pardon. The quiet bill was called "The Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000." One hundred pages in length, it was introduced in both houses on December 14 and passed, without debate, the next day. The President's Working Group on Financial Markets, led by Summers and Greenspan, wrote Congress that it "strongly supports" the bill, which would maintain the U.S. "competitive position in the over-the-counter derivative markets by providing legal certainty and promoting innovation, transparency and efficiency in our financial markets." Section 17 of their 11th-hour bill states that "This Act shall supersede and preempt the application of any State or local law that prohibits or regulates gaming or the operation of bucket shops." The legalizing language was folded into a spending bill, so no member had to be on record as voting for it.

When the Founding Fathers talked about the consent of the governed, that's not what they had in mind. This dark-of-the-night law immunized derivatives from any reporting, regulation, or legal limits. Consequently, derivatives continued as a bilateral, unregulated market, which is why it happened that, when the trouble hit, no one knew who owed what to whom. On June 30, 2008, there were $684 trillion of derivatives outstanding.

Jefferson and Madison, unfortunately, were right: Hamilton's debt and financial policies have undermined the democratic victory of the American people. Hamilton's descendants created a financial system so complex that it could not be managed. It was so highly leveraged that it was prone to crisis at any time. The bailout hit one speed-bump in Congress, then plowed ahead, operating outside the law and without, in Chairman Bernanke's phrase, any "democratic legitimacy." Will President Obama bring the bailout under democratic control? His team of economic advisors makes that unlikely. It is counterintuitive to think that those responsible for the train wreck can put it back on track. Larry Summers, with his "understandings" and "implied consensus," has obvious contempt for the consent of the governed. Aren't there any bright people in the country who haven't worked for Goldman-Sachs or the Treasury Department in the Bush-Clinton-Bush administrations?

The globalization chickens are roosting. Manufacturing has gone to China. Agriculture, to South America. The back office, to India. That leaves us with "management and financing," and Washington has made a royal mess of that. ©

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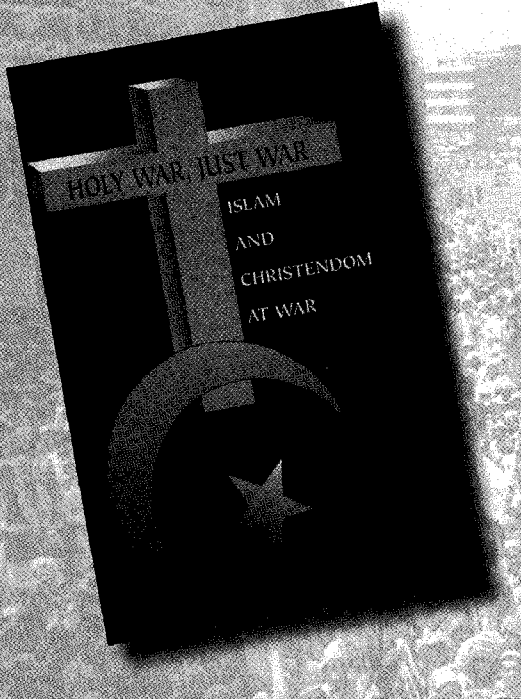

Holy War, Just War

Islam and Christendom at War

by Roberto de Mattei

"The term 'clash of civilizations' is not a palatable one in political and media circles," writes Roberto de Mattei, but it is the only proper framework for understanding how the fundamental theological differences between Christianity and Islam inform the way their adherents wage war. In this important work, he explains these differences with careful scholarship and defends with eloquence the "lawfulness of war against an enemy who is attacking the West, with the aim of establishing a moral and social order that is radically opposed to our history and tradition."

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by Taki Theodoracopulos

To Spurn a Stranger Cur

By the time you read this it might be very old news, and if it is, treat it as a background briefing. But if the sonofabitch I'm writing about is still out on bail and moving his ill-gotten assets around Israel and the environs, pay attention. What you read can one day save your savings.

It was last summer when a friend of mine of very long standing asked me to come on board his boat for a business meeting. "What are you doing for a regular income?" he asked. "I might have something very interesting for you. There is no risk involved." March 31, 2008, was the date I had exited from Fix Asset Management, the fund of funds I had invested in since the spring of 1990 and in which I had enjoyed 20 percent yearly compounded returns until the you-know-what hit the fan in October 2007. Fix Asset Management was the brainchild of my childhood friend Karolos Fix, a German-Greek whose ancestors had come to Greece from Bavaria with the first Greek king, Prince Otto of Bavaria, back in 1837 (as had some of mine). Fix had started his fund during the 1980's and had really hit his stride by the time I joined in.

But back to my "friend" on his yacht. He seemed awfully eager to make me rich. But being the fool that I am, I never suspected a thing. "The name is Madoff," said the yachtsman, "and he's more than a genius, he's a miracle worker. The trouble is his fund is closed, but you can have some of my action. There are no fees involved. It will cost you nothing except for your original investment, say ten million or more. I will allocate you some of my holdings."

I was dumbfounded. I thanked my friend and told him I was ready to invest immediately. But then I started thinking about "owing" him. I am getting on in years and don't care to owe anyone anything. He was obviously going out of his way to help me. That's when the princess came in, my wife, or better yet the mother of my children, as I like to refer to her. Alexandra had never warmed to my friend and told me she'd rather I didn't accept his generous offer. "There's something wrong when someone offers something for nothing," she said. A wise woman, as it turned out.

Four months later the megacrook Bernard Madoff was exposed, and you know the rest. Three very old and good friends, including Karolos Fix, whose fund I had exited only a short time before, had gone down for the count. Fix had lost 400 million greenbacks and counting. Now I ask you: Was my friend trying to unload worthless shares before exposure, or was he trying to do me a favor out of the kindness of his heart? The reason I have not revealed his name is because there are still doubts in my mind. Alexandra thinks he knew. I am not so sure. The reason I believe I'm right is because he, too, has been caught in the Jewish tsunami, as some Wall Street WASPs are calling it. In an ironic twist, I was informed by my Swiss banker that I owned Madoff shares, purchased by the bank after I had told them the megacrook was a genius and a miracle worker. Serves me right.

What I find outrageous is that the swindler was given bail by federal judge Gabriel Gorenstein, even though he failed to meet the requirements of his bond, and as of this writing is skulking around New York in his ankle bracelet, most likely moving assets to offshore funds. The other thing I find very strange is that Madoff had been investigated back in 1999 and repeatedly brought to the attention of SEC staff, without any action ever taken. That a Madoff family member was married to an SEC official, I am convinced, had something to do with the SEC's paralysis. Madoff is one of those ghastly human beings who maniacally pushed for more cash until the end. A week before his scam was discovered he was asking his pals to invest.

And another thing. The newspapers and media have been reporting from day one about all the Jewish charities that have been wiped out. In other words, Christians who lost don't matter. I almost feel like repeating Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, updating it to 2008. Here's what I think happened. Madoff used his Jewish connections to raise funds, and when questions were asked, high-ranking respected Jewish leaders protected him. He was, after all, a big donor to Jewish charities. Indeed, he was using Jewish charities to attract Jewish investors. This does not take a genius to figure out. The Christians were the real schmucks. They are the ones who invested like gangbusters and have lost billions. Which leads me to ask: What the hell is going on here? A billionaire of the Jewish faith like Carl Shapiro drops $145 million, and his loss is called a catastrophe to Jewish charities. A goy like Walter Noel drops $7.5 billion, or my friend Karolos Fix loses $400 million, and they're called careless fools. European banks, ditto. Perhaps the game is rigged. Jews are the victims, *punto basta*, as they say in the land of pasta.

I have seen my yachtsman friend since, and we commiserated. He lost much, much more than I did. Here's chastened, bullet-dodging Taki's first rule: Never but never believe a sure thing, especially when the word *genius* is banded about. Especially when you're invited to leave your yacht for someone else's.

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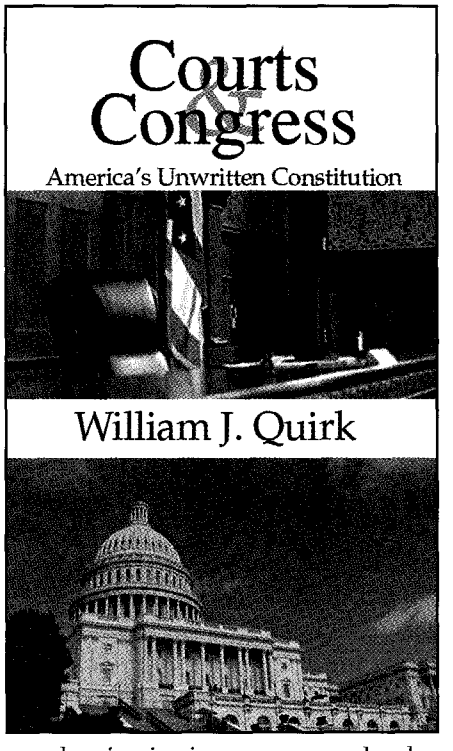
Strippers to the Rescue

by Stephen B. Presser

"Courts of justice cautiously abstain from deciding more than what the immediate point submitted to their consideration requires."
—Mr. Justice Nicholl

Courts & Congress: America's Unwritten Constitution
by William J. Quirk
Foreword by Ralph Nader
New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers; 312 pp., $49.95



In what was probably the most laudable achievement of his administration, President George W. Bush placed on the Supreme Court two justices, Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito, who believe that judges are not supposed to make it up as they go along. We now have a President who has made clear that his beliefs are different. Barack Obama has said that he wants to place judges on the bench who understand what it's like to be a single mother or a member of a minority. He has signaled, in other words, that he believes the job of the courts is to ameliorate the lot of the less fortunate. For him, and for his friends and advisors—Prof. Cass Sunstein of Harvard, one of Obama's former colleagues at the law school of the University of Chicago and a likely choice for the Supreme Court, for example—justice is not supposed to be blind but a handmaiden in "spreading the wealth," following the policies that Obama famously outlined to Joe the Plumber.

Those who argued for the passage of the U.S. Constitution in 1787-89 did so because they believed the state legislatures were failing to enforce the basic rules of private property, and that demagogues in the states were threatening to undermine the foundations of commerce and future prosperity. The Framers created a structure whereby the states would be restrained from interfering with contracts, the currency would be controlled by a purportedly responsible central government, and each state would be guaranteed a republican form of government. The new country was not to be a democracy, because the people would not rule directly and because there would be built-in safeguards against popular excesses—such as suspension of debts and other legal obligations. Still, the Framers formulated a government in which the people were to have the right to manage their own affairs, through the election of representatives and the establishment of courts that would apply the Constitution and the laws in a neutral manner.

This conception, as William J. Quirk brilliantly demonstrates, is now in tatters. Over the course of the last 70 years or so, our representatives in Congress have, in order to secure their continuing reelections, avoided controversial political issues by ceding control over social issues such as abortion, religion, and race to the courts, and the power to make war to the president. Thus, while the Constitution gives only Congress the power to declare war, we have been involved in three major conflicts—Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq—with the loss of tens of thousands of American lives, all without such a congressional declaration.

In short, though the Constitution was supposed to guarantee the right of self-government to Americans, the "Imperial Presidency" and the "Imperial Judiciary" now rule us, while our representatives, convening in Wash-

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ington at what Quirk dubs "The Happy Convention," concentrate on channeling resources (through earmarks, bailouts, and other measures) to favored constituencies. The Court returns the favor by declaring federal term limits unconstitutional, and, in return for the free hand it gives him, the President shields Congress from any responsibility for his foreign adventures.

With the redistributionists about to assume control of the Executive Branch, with their possibly filibuster-free control of the Senate, with them soon to be in a position to pack a Court now full of superannuated justices, and with the economy in shambles and major financial institutions failing left and right, the case for optimism is not strong. The terrorist threat still looms, as shown by recent events in Mumbai, and for all the temporary security we may have gained after seven years of President Bush's "War on Terror," Quirk is quite rightly concerned that we may have lost our souls, and that the Framers' efforts to preserve popular sovereignty, to build a republic maintained by the rule of law, have deteriorated almost to the point of no return.

The lament for the lost rule of law is not new, but Professor Quirk has made a signal contribution in demonstrating that the Constitution offers Congress the tools, if only it will use them, to rein in the Imperial Judiciary, if not the Imperial Presidency. The principal means he explores in this book (as he has in these pages) is the "stripper"—that is, legislation passed to remove jurisdiction over particular matters from the federal courts, including the Supreme Court. The promulgation of strippers would have the effect of reinvigorating the state courts and the state legislatures, bodies presumably closer to the people, and would thus reestablish something closer to Jefferson's conception of democracy. (As a man of the South, Quirk is nothing if not a good Jeffersonian.) In plain language, Quirk reminds us, Article III of the Constitution permits Congress to decide what appellate jurisdiction to give to the Supreme Court and what jurisdiction to give to the lower federal courts—and, indeed, whether to permit the establishment of lower federal courts at all. And while this provision is virtually unknown to nearly all Americans, the Supreme Court itself has affirmed it, in *Ex parte McCardle* (1868).

A significant number of the Framers thought that state courts could preserve our rights as well as federal courts could. Indeed, many of them foresaw that the federal courts would abandon sound jurisprudential and republican principles and promote the power of a central government that could favor particular elites and betray the people. In order to minimize this risk, the Constitution gives Congress the power to determine what sort of matters the federal courts will hear, and even to deprive the Supreme Court of all jurisdiction save in the case of ambassadors and disputes between states. With several strokes of the legislative pen, then, Congress could remove from the federal courts matters involving race, religion, abortion, homosexuality, term limits, or any other controversial public policy or cultural issue, and return them for resolution to the American people themselves. Such a move would mean different approaches in different states, of course, but Quirk quite properly poses the question of whether the price of uniformity—the loss of popular sovereignty and rule by the Happy Convention or the "Unwritten Constitution"—is one we really want to pay in order to obtain all-or-nothing solutions to these social problems.

At least four massive obstacles stand in the way of using constitutional strippers. The first is that the promulgation of strippers would require a Congress with the courage to return government to the people, and with the altruism to abandon the sinecures incumbency has provided most senators and representatives. The second is that any president committed to the powers the Happy Convention pro-

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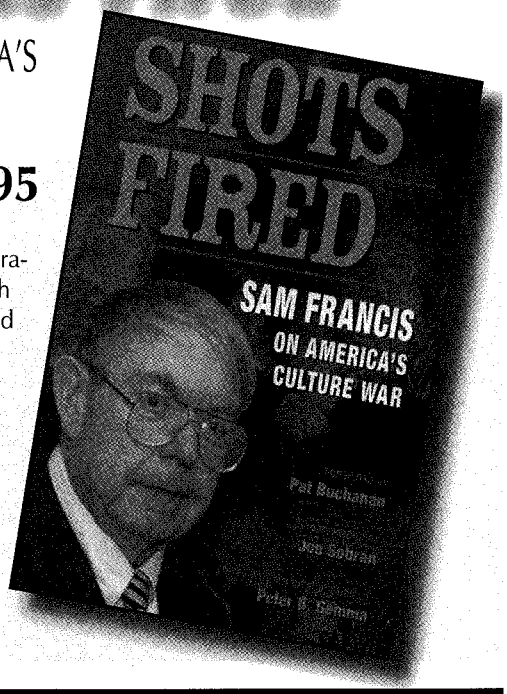
—*Aaron D. Wolf*



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vides him would likely veto a stripper, and a congressional supermajority capable of overriding that veto might be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. The third is that virtually all constitutional scholars and most of the legal profession believe that strippers, insofar as they might allow state legislatures and courts to decline to follow the rulings of the Supreme Court (or the lower federal courts), are unconstitutional, and perhaps even in violation of due process, equal protection, or the privileges and immunities of U.S. citizens. (There are some exceptions: My intrepid colleague Martin Redish, one of the country's leading experts on federal jurisdiction, as noted by Professor Quirk, quite sensibly believes that the Constitution means what it says, and that therefore strippers are perfectly permissible. Redish thinks strippers are bad policy, however.)

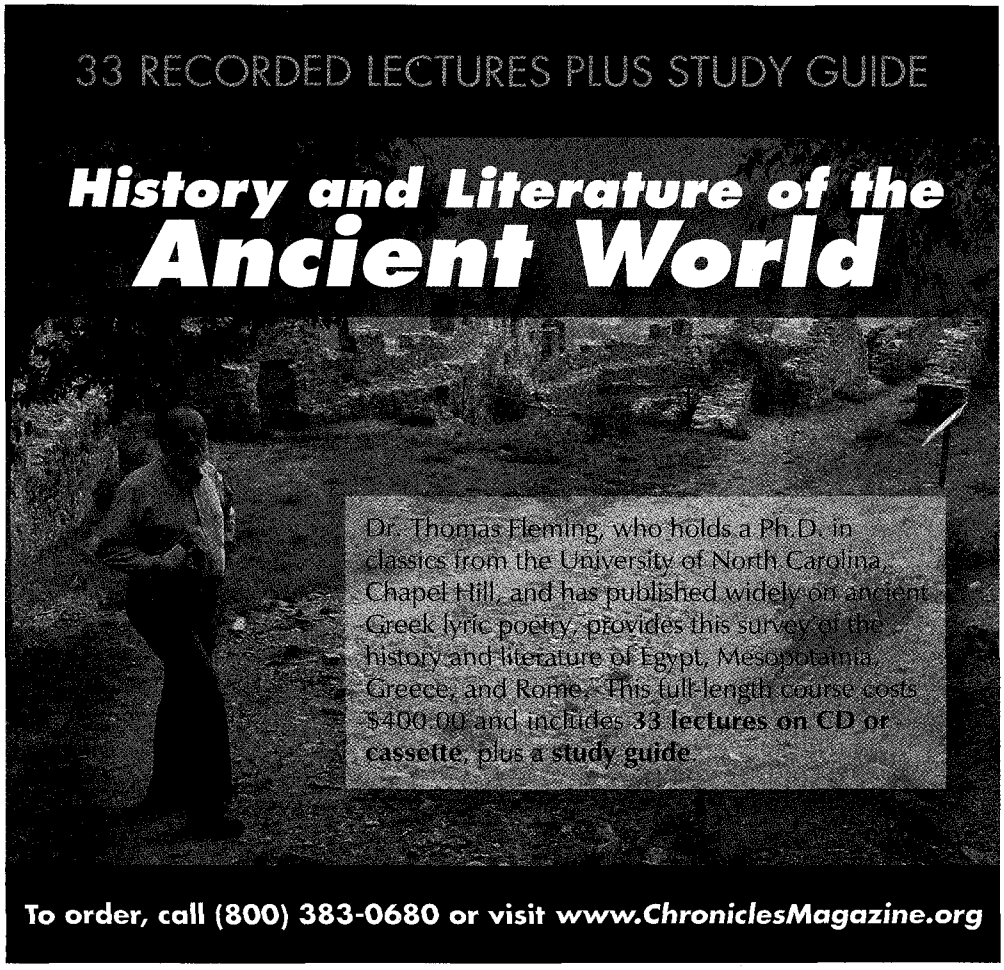
Quirk argues (following Jefferson and Jackson) that there is nothing in the Constitution that makes the Supreme Court the exclusive arbiter of that document's meaning and that, indeed, it is the job of all three coequal branches of the federal government to determine constitutional meaning and to act pursuant to their determinations. That understanding, which is actually gaining favor these days in the academy under the name "departmentalism," might eventually overcome excessive academic court worship. A fourth obstacle exists, however, which may prove the most difficult to overcome: The Court itself could declare strippers impermissible on theories borrowed from the academy. Because the 14th Amendment's ill-defined procedural protections were passed after Article III, they offer the Court an opportunity to rule that due process, equal protection, or privileges and immunities trump jurisdiction-stripping. There is every reason to suppose the Supreme Court, especially one augmented by Obama appointments, would take this tack.

Something very near that tack was taken in *Boumediene* v. *Bush* (2008), when a five-person majority disregarded a clear congressional stripper to deprive the federal courts of jurisdiction to hear *habeas corpus* proceedings brought by Guantanamo detainees. Justice Scalia, in a blistering dissent, observed that

> It is therefore clear that Congress and the Executive—both political branches—have determined that limiting the role of civilian courts in adjudicating whether prisoners captured abroad are properly detained is important to success in the war that some 190,000 of our men and women are now fighting.

Nevertheless, Scalia continued, "The Court today decrees that no good reason to accept the judgment of the other two branches is 'apparent.'" Scalia nicely summarizes the problem with the Imperial Court that Quirk identifies: "What competence does the Court have to second-guess the judgment of Congress and the President on such a point? None whatever. But the Court blunders in nonetheless." A Court with absolutely no competence in national-security matters, but which feels free to dictate the means of conducting a war, obviously is not likely to restrain itself from overturning strippers of all kinds.

Recapturing the Constitution through strippers is unlikely, as is Professor Quirk's other inspired reform measure to bypass Congress and allow constitutional amendments whenever three quarters of the state legislatures demand them. Yet, as a true son of the South, William Quirk understands that a lost cause is the one most worth fighting for. He is one of our great expositors of what the Framers gave us, and *Courts & Congress* is his finest effort to date. If Professor Quirk's ideas were ever to penetrate the consciousness of the American people, they might impel them to toss out the congressional incumbents, reduce the role of the Platonic Guardians on the federal benches, and take back the Republic. ©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Homage to a Friend

by Tom Landess

Eliot and His Age
by Russell Kirk
Wilmington: ISI Books; 460 pp., $18.00

Years ago, when a Vanderbilt graduate-school party was careening toward promiscuity, a quiet young woman, an English major, suddenly shocked everyone by saying, "Tell you what let's do: Let's all name the books we've never read." Suddenly it was time to go home. In five minutes the room was empty, except for the host and hostess, hauling half-filled glasses to the kitchen and dumping cigarette butts out of ashtrays.

I for one could have mentioned a number of "essential books" I hadn't read, among them Russell Kirk's *Eliot and His Age*, a study I'd frequently recommended to students as "the best single work on the subject." I made that pronouncement without reservation. I knew Russell Kirk.

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute recently reissued the title, and after having actually read it, I can confirm my original assessment: It's the best book on Eliot ever written. And, more than that, it is a brilliant performance, the finest literary biography I've ever read.

First of all, it is gracefully written, yet full of linguistic surprises—witty and imaginative. Kirk was one of the premier stylists of his generation—and that means more to me than all the footnotes in the Library of Congress. In addition, his commentary on the poetry and the age is clear and precise, nothing like the academic prose that ruins most literary histories, even for other academics. Herbert Read once observed that "style is the ultimate morality of mind." No style illustrates that truth better than Russell Kirk's. The clarity of his mind is mirrored in the clarity of his prose.

And the book is full of Kirk's own memories of T.S. Eliot. It's as if the reader had come across an album filled with snapshots of a long-dead friend. Kirk knew Eliot well. When in London—and he spent a lot of time there—he called on the great poet, had lunch or dinner with him, and discussed the important matters that later critics and biographers would have to address only through the reading of verse, essays and reviews, letters, and the testimony of others. As Kirk wrote:

> He was thirty years older than I, but we had read the same books, knew the same places, were almost as one in literary preferences and social convictions, and had several old friends in common.

Both men were committed Christians who had come to orthodoxy after a period of doubt, and both had discovered England about the same time, though Kirk remained a disgruntled American while Eliot became a British subject. So no one born in the second half of the 20th century could possibly know Eliot the man and poet as well as did Russell Kirk.

In fact, many early critics who tackled poems like "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* concluded that they were pure literary constructs, that Eliot was writing poetry unrelated to his private life. Had they known him better, they would have seen the neurotic face of Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot, his first wife, peering out from behind key allusive images and ironic dialogue. As Kirk shows, Eliot's problem with the world was both philosophical and personal—a bad ontology and epistemology on the world's part, a bad marriage on his.

You can understand the poetry without knowing about the marriage, but the philosophy is crucial; and Kirk, like Eliot, was steeped in it. As this book suggests, both men had sifted through and understood the work of the important philosophers—classical to modern. T.S. Eliot's dissertation—begun at Harvard, completed at Oxford—was an abstruse display of learning: *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. When it was published in 1964, shortly before his death, Eliot wrote: "Forty-six years after my academic philosophizing came to an end, I find myself unable to think in the terminology of this essay. Indeed, I do not pretend to understand it." But Kirk understood it and showed the reader just how much of Bradley was essential to a full understanding of Eliot's poetry—and how much was irrelevant.

Both Kirk and Eliot were deeply interested in social history, particularly those works that shed light on what Eliot-oriented critics would come to call "the modern predicament." A generation of intellectuals would begin to see the present as Eliot saw it—as a falling away from certitude, a loss of tradition and hence of faith, an aimless wandering in self-doubt. In such a world, the individual could no longer identify with a rich and vital past—or shrug off a sparse and decadent present.

"Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, and "The Hollow Men" render 20th-century society in imagery and dialogue that reflect the fragmentation of modern consciousness. Eliot's first readers didn't think of themselves as solipsistic until they read "Prufrock." Then many recognized their own shriveled souls as reflected in Eliot's protagonist. At the same time, they experienced a sharp sense of loss, enhanced by the ironic tone of the poem, which pricked the conscience of an entire generation. That tone—or something akin to it—was replicated by a generation of poets writing in a "period style" that dominated the literary scene for decades. Everybody wanted to sound like—indeed, to be—T.S. Eliot.

Following *The Waste Land*, which ends in hope, he wrote poetry that was less ironic and more overtly Christian. Eliot had thought his way out of a despair that to him was both highly personal and endemic to the society around him. In 1927, he was baptized in the Church of England, and a year later he published a collection of essays, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, saying in the Introduction, "The general point of view [of the essays] may be described as classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in

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religion." On that platform he stood unyielding for the next 38 years.

As for Eliot's contact with the literati of London, as Kirk shows, most instantly recognized his genius and began calling him Great Tom long before the world had heard of him. A few of them—Roy Campbell, Wyndham Lewis—became lifelong friends and encouraged his principled break with the self-satisfied but effete literary establishment of that day. In several key references Kirk captures the essence of this literary malaise—for example, a dinner presided over by Sir Edmund Gosse, the rich, self-appointed Lord High Chancellor of English letters. Evelyn Waugh said of him:

> To me he epitomized all that I found ignoble in the profession of letters . . . I saw Gosse as a Mr. Tulkinghorn [a character in *Bleak House*], the soft-footed, inconspicuous, ill-natured habitué of the great world, and I longed for a demented lady's-maid to make an end of him.

In addition to making several good friends, Eliot also got a close look at the enemies of the permanent things. Surprisingly, as a newly married banker, he hung out with the Bloomsbury crowd, a squawking nest of atheists, socialists, and sexual adventurers, epitomized by Bertrand Russell, who wrote of Eliot, "It is quite funny how I have come to love him, as if he were my son."

Funny indeed. Soon Eliot would become one of the chief defenders of Christianity (*The Idea of a Christian Society*) in his time. Bertrand Russell, a social revolutionary and chronic adulterer, was already a chief adversary of the Church, albeit an astonishingly inept and simplistic one. Of Russell's feel-good, substitute-religion, Eliot wrote, with heavy irony:

> I cannot regret that such views as Mr. Russell's, or what we may call the enervate gospel of happiness, are openly expounded and defended. They help to make clear, what the nineteenth century had been largely occupied in obscuring, that there is no such thing as just Morality; but that for any man who thinks clearly, as his Faith is, so will his Morals be.

Eliot's writings on religion and politics are by no means confined to quarrels with his contemporaries. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* Eliot defends, among other things, a concept popular in 2008—that of "diversity." Both Eliot and the politically correct of the 21st century believe that diversity is best served by an overarching unity. As Kirk observes: "It is to Christianity that Eliot looks for a unifying power; to Christian culture, within which much diversity is possible." Contemporary advocates of a unifying structure tend to look to the United Nations. Perennially dissatisfied with America, these believe that a benign, chirpy, all-powerful global government would somehow create a world culture more vital than any existing regional or national culture. Of that attitude, Eliot wrote, "[Any world culture] which was simply a uniform culture would be no culture at all. We should have a humanity dehumanized. It would be a nightmare." His words, written in 1948, still speak to us as we argue over the same irresolvable issues with the same prophets of the coming millennium. (Which millennium? Any millennium—except, of course, the true one.)

As for a summary of T.S. Eliot's achievement, Kirk admits that the poet-critic failed to accomplish the great goal of his life:

> He had endeavored consciously to redeem the time; at the end, he was under no illusion that he had succeeded. Self-censorious always—in this very like his ancestral connections John Adams and John Quincy Adams—Eliot entertained no inflated opinion of his abilities or his achievements. His best poems had seemed only preludes to some splendor of concept that he never wholly contrived to voice; his best plays had been experiments, unperfected; his best essays had been challenging, rather than magisterial; his social criticism had been an exercise in definition, not a grand design. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." Had he been meant, like Coleridge, for something greater? Like Coleridge, had he procrastinated and lingered in reverie, while time ran out? Were his the sins of omission?

If T.S. Eliot failed in accomplishing the impossible, Kirk—in a splendid assessment of his subject's career as poet, playwright, and essayist—rescues Eliot from latter-day critics, biographers, and other bottom-feeders who say he was homosexual, antisemitic, elitist, fascist, cranky, religiose, straitlaced, and—the most absurd charge of all—irrelevant. It takes Kirk just ten paragraphs to set the record straight: Eliot wrote a substantial body of poetry that perfectly captured the spirit of the 20th century and "renewed that age's moral imagination." His plays revived English verse drama and made it work again on the 20th-century stage. And his essays and reviews—some 600 of them—"rescued the critic's art from personal impressionism" and "stripped the follies of the time," without sparing "the morals of his age, or its politics, or its economics, or its notions of education, or its strange gods."

Kirk states these conclusions without offering argument, facts, or illustration. They need no support. The entire book stands behind his chiseled generalizations, rendering them self-evident. In writing this monumental study, Kirk built a bridge from the future to the past, from tomorrow's readers to yesterday's greatest poet, from ignorance to understanding.

In the 1940's, Eliot was regarded as "too hard" for students. Today he is regarded as "too reactionary." In both cases, blame the teachers and be assured that as long as Russell Kirk's matchless book is in print, neither excuse will suffice.

Tom Landess is a contributing editor to Chronicles.

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Homeric Lessons

by Matthew A. Roberts

The Iliad
translated by Herbert Jordan
Introduction by E. Christian Kopff
Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press; 512 pp., $16.95

"Should one have lived, only to read the twenty-third song of the *Iliad*, he could not lament of his existence," commented G.E. Lessing. Of course, in Lessing's day, many of the literati could have read the *Iliad* in Greek.

Today, the typical reader experiences the *Iliad* in translation, and he has over 100 translations to choose from, a number that has steadily grown over the last century. Already by the end of the 19th century, scholars were debating the merits and faults of existing translations—those of Chapman, Cowper, Dryden, Pope, Sotheby, and Tickel—most of which were concerned more with the poetics of English than with faithfulness to Homer.

The 20th century has given rise to numerous other renderings, often emphasizing colloquial English usage, free verse, literalness, or prose. (Homer's formulaic Greek was not at all colloquial, but translators today make him sound chatty.) Although these modernized retellings may serve pedagogical purposes, especially for the student learning Greek, they do not endure as poetic renditions. Richmond Lattimore's 1951 translation was for decades the staple of undergraduate courses. While Lattimore is praised for his literalness, translating each line of Greek with one line of English, he is criticized for his awkwardness because of needed filler to complete his six-stress lines.

Herbert Jordan, an attorney and independent scholar of Greek, now presents a novel translation of the *Iliad* with an informative Introduction by classicist E. Christian Kopff. Jordan seeks to rectify the shortcomings of Lattimore's meter with a five-beat line, avoiding unnecessary filler, which leads him, according to Kopff, to omit most formulas and translate "in creative and inventive ways reminiscent of Christopher Logue's effective and hyper-modern *Iliad* versions." Employing contemporary language, Jordan renders "supple verse that is loyal to the traditions of English blank verse."

Alfred North Whitehead once described Western philosophy as a "series of footnotes to Plato." If an analogy were made to literature, one could say that Western literature effectively began with the *Iliad*. In this respect, the *Iliad* is one of the greatest works of Western literature, and to translate it is both an intellective treat and intimidating task.

The *Iliad* is part of a larger cycle of oral epic poems, dealing with gods, heroes, monsters, and wars. It is the story of the wrath of Achilles, set during the Trojan War.

Unlike the organized armies of Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar, Homeric warriors exemplified the virtues of aristocratic warfare, emphasizing individual prowess in battle. Glory (*kleos*) directed the actions of Achilles and his comrades. Kopff aptly summarizes their world:

> Every part of the narrative—characters, story, and language—is traditional, but the parts are organized to present the audience with the moral underpinnings of the heroic world. Each person has a place, with obligations to those above and below. These obligations are not theoretical, but practical and concrete. Priests build temples and sacrifice. Gods send down plagues and change the course of battles. All this happens to ensure that each figure receives the appropriate honor. This is not a world of abstract rights and general moral principles, but of what the English philosopher F.H. Bradley called "my station and its duties" and rewards.

Achilles is the fiercest fighter among the Greeks, and his battle exploits win for him the beautiful Briseis. Agamemnon, commander of the loose confederation of Greek tribes, insults Achilles by taking the warrior's prize for himself. Seething, Achilles retires from fighting, in hopes that Agamemnon's forces will go down in defeat. Achilles entreats his mother, the goddess Thetis, that Zeus will let the Trojans

> drive the Greeks to the ships' sterns and the sea.
> Then those who survive will resent their king,
> Atreus' far-ruling son, because they will know
> how foolish he was to wrong the best Achaean.

Achilles has pursued honor too far. Because of his refusal to fight, his dear friend Patroclus must stand in his place to instill courage in the Greeks. After the Trojan hero Hector kills Patroclus, Achilles transfers his wrath from Agamemnon to Hector. When the two later meet on the battlefield, Hector suggests they pledge that the winner not defile the loser's body, whereupon Achilles responds,

> As there are no pacts between lions and men—
> who always mean each other only the worst—
> nor meetings of minds between wolves and lambs,
> so for us two there is no amity,
> nor will there be truce till one of us falls

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and sheds enough of his blood
to glut Ares.

After slaying Hector, Achilles pierces Hector's tendons and drags him behind his chariot, leaving the Trojan's head to drag as he circles Troy three times.

Eventually, Achilles sets his rage aside. In the final book of the *Iliad*—in one of the most moving passages of all Western literature—Achilles makes amends with Priam, Hector's father. Sitting at the feet of Achilles, Priam weeps for Hector; Achilles mourns his father and Patroclus:

[L]et our hearts be quiet despite
the grief we feel.
There is nothing more to be
gained by more lament.
The gods ordain that we miserable mortals
shall live in sorrow, while they
have no cares.
On Zeus's floor there stands a
pair of jars,
one each for the good and ill
fortune he gives.
The man who receives a mixture
from both
encounters sometimes bounty,
sometimes pain.
A man to whom Zeus gives only the ill
must stagger hungry over the
earth's face,
roaming, honored by neither
gods nor men.

Achilles agrees to cease all fighting for Hector's funeral, and there the *Iliad* ends: "So Trojans honored Hector, master of stallions." Although the poem traces the wrath of Achilles, it ends in honor of Hector, the family man who loved his wife and son, and defended his city. "Achilles," Kopff notes, "with his conflicts and passionate decisions, is at the center of the poem, but Hector is its heart."

If you want an easy-to-read rendition of the *Iliad*, buy Herbert Jordan's accessible translation.

Matthew A. Roberts writes from Parkville, Missouri.

The Smoke of Satan

by Tom Piatak

The Grand Inquisitor
by John Zmirak and Carla Millar
New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company; 76 pp., $19.95

Before Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be a fortress against the raging tide of modernity, a supremely self-confident institution that attracted converts of the caliber of Evelyn Waugh, G.K. Chesterton, Ronald Knox, and Christopher Dawson. After Vatican II, the Church's attitude toward modernity changed, vocations dried up, and entire countries came close to losing the Faith. Clearly, something had gone wrong. In the famous words of Pope Paul VI, the smoke of Satan had entered the sanctuary of the Church. How this happened is the subject of John Zmirak's graphic novel *The Grand Inquisitor*, which tells its tale through Zmirak's blank verse and the arresting illustrations of Canadian artist Carla Millar.

Zmirak's novel—well written, inventive, at times even profound—deals with an issue of importance to non-Catholics, as well as Catholics. Despite the efforts of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, many established Catholic institutions in the West now seem to believe in nothing more than liberalism; the resulting loss of faith in Europe has had serious spiritual and secular consequences. I doubt, for example, that men filled with the faith of Charles Martel, Jan Sobieski, or Don John of Austria would have allowed Europe to be overrun by a quiet Islamic invasion such as the one we have witnessed in the past few decades.

The heroes of Zmirak's novel are an African cleric famous for leading his people to martyrdom by the Islamic despots of the Sudan, who shrank from killing such willing martyrs under the cameras of CNN, and Cardinal Miroslavsky, a Ukrainian cleric who survived the Gulag. His villain is a wily veteran of Vatican II, Primo Dangeli, a priest-psychiatrist who also wears the robes of a cardinal and is drawn by Millar to resemble Teilhard de Chardin. Despite their antagonism, Miroslavsky and Dangeli see the contemporary Church in similar terms. The Ukrainian cardinal represents "Catholic tradition, in its last flowering, on the verge of final extinction," a tradition he describes as

> a vast and complex history, an elaboration of doctrine, of meditation upon the divine truths revealed by God to man, a meticulous intellectual and spiritual discipline that has been tested in the blast furnace of a hundred major heresies and encyclopedias of slander, undergone centuries of persecution, fire, sword, torture, seduction, famine, plunder, jihad, revolution, and unremitting attack by the principalities and powers of deepest Hell.

His antagonist represents "the national hierarchies . . . religious orders . . . schools and universities . . . journals and seminaries" marked by "defiance . . . mockery [and] tireless resistance to [the Pope's] will," men who "reckoned dead these thirty years" such "obsolete theological terms" as "Deposit of Faith," "the Kingship of Christ," "the contempt of this world," and "heresy." But the Catholic tradition represented by Miroslavsky, although weakened, is not dead, which is why it continues to arouse such fierce opposition both outside and even within the Church. Zmirak's novel presents an ingenious explanation for how this weakening of the Faith came about, and an equally ingenious hope for recovering the former vitality of the Church Militant.

Contributing editor Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.

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by Joe Ecclesia

America's Coldest Winter

Your Excellency:

To illustrate how Christians must live in both this world and the next, our parish priest recently quoted a Jesuit who once said: "In our right hand we carry the *New York Times*. In our left hand we carry the Bible."

Another story underlines this Jesuitical observation. An older couple were perplexed by the antics of their son, Michael. Some evenings he spent drinking and partying, while others found him kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The baffled parents sought help from their priest. "When he's out tonight," the priest advised, "I want you to put a Bible, a twenty-dollar bill, and a pint of whiskey on the kitchen table. Then hide in the pantry and wait for him to come home. Whichever object Michael takes from the table will reveal his direction in life."

The couple followed these instructions and were watching from the pantry when Michael entered the kitchen. He marched straight to the table, pocketed the twenty, took a long pull from the bottle of whiskey, picked up the Bible, and left the kitchen.

Flummoxed, the couple told their story to Father. "Holy Mother of God!" the priest exclaimed. "Your son's called to be a Jesuit!"

Well, we're all Black Robes now, aren't we, Excellency? Just like the Jesuits, we've got ourselves into one godawful bog, mostly by focusing on our right hand while ignoring our left. Like some cranked-up celebrity on powders and booze, America is cracking to pieces; the empire is disintegrating. Spiritually, too, our society is much diminished, with many citizens paying obeisance to a pantheon of secular deities: the state, mass entertainment, pleasure, and ourselves.

Our Church reflects this slippage in the practice of faith and morality. To profess belief in the teachings of the Catechism and the Ten Commandments, to speak of evil and mortal sin, rouses a sneer among many Catholics, even priests and some bishops. They regard dogma as old-fashioned, unsuited to a world demanding nuance and nicety. Common sense also withers in this clash between doctrine and wiggly-squiggly emotionalism. The American Church urges social justice for illegal immigrants, yet seldom speaks of justice for Americans who have lost their jobs or seen their wages cut competing against alien lawbreakers. The Church condemns abortion, yet turns a blind eye to the shenanigans of Catholic pro-abortion politicians. The Church claims to stand for traditional marriage, yet issues more annulments than the rest of the world put together. The Church educates her own, yet produces multitudes of the dumbest practitioners of the Faith in Christendom. The Church claims that Christ is truly present at the Mass, yet many celebrants often appear bored out of their skulls.

Illustrations of Catholic foolishness abound. Take, for example, our diocesan newspaper of December 5, 2008. On one page a Jesuit priest declares that "war is never justified." The Vatican, we read, has proclaimed that the Beatles wrote better pop songs than those written today. One article, apparently aimed at really stupid Catholics, explains the basics of the Mass. In another, the archbishop of San Francisco asks people on both sides of the "gay marriage" issue to "disagree without being disagreeable." A bishop in Mumbai urges Indians to forgive and hold hands after the terrorist attacks.

For darker illustrations of creeping moral turpitude, we need look no further than our own Catholic politicians: Home Depot Joe, Vice President of the United States; Tom Daschle, secretary of health and human services; and Nancy "Pope" Pelosi, speaker of the house. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Catholic pro-abortion, pro-"homosexual marriage" governor of California, told a Toronto press conference that "I always said you should not have your religion interfere with government policies or with the policies of the people." Maria Shriver, Schwarzenegger's Catholic pro-abortion wife, told Sally Quinn of the *Washington Post*, "I find I don't spend a lot of time trying to square my daily life with the institutional church. I pick and choose." (Did you know that during his presidential campaign Barack Obama met on three occasions with homosexual Episcopalian bishop Gene Robinson? How many times did Senator Obama meet with you guys to discuss traditional marriage?)

Are you bishops blind? Can you not see that Holy Mother Church is being replaced by Holy Nanny State? Smiley-Face Fascism is sitting right here in the front yard, staring at us like a gator in a golf-course pond. Support for the major candidates this past election leave no doubt that Americans now worship the state, a Frankenstein's monster spawned by Abraham Lincoln and brought to adulthood by Democrats and Republicans.

This New Fascism doesn't depend on the jackboot, the raised fist, or internment camps but on persuasion. Those few who oppose the new way are destroyed through media attacks, blackmail, or tax audits. But like the old fascism, our new order does depend on fear. You watch, Excellency: In the face of terrorism and economic chaos liberty will be shaken like a rat in a terrier's teeth.

Yours for the Resistance,

Joe Ecclesia

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by Scott P. Richert

Hot Rod Lincoln

He knew that he was destined for greatness. The son of uneducated manual laborers, immigrants to Illinois, he was never much of a student, but he would become a successful lawyer. From a young age, though, his sights were set on political power. Through his political connections, he got himself elected to the Illinois House of Representatives and, later, to the U.S. Congress from Illinois. Gregarious when he wanted to be, he was known to all by his monosyllabic three-letter nickname, not his trisyllabic given name.

He was well liked by some, but despised by others. Very few people had a neutral opinion, and even some of those who liked him and supported him in his rise to power were disturbed by his odd, self-centered behavior. He seemed unable to show much human emotion for those around him.

Whatever else anyone might have thought of him, he was a masterful politician, attacking corruption while engaging in inside deals that helped him both politically and personally. Unhappy with the location of the Illinois capitol, he essentially moved it to where he was living. But his ambitions extended beyond Illinois, and he needed money and backing to fulfill his dream of rising from his modest roots to the highest office in the land. Washington beckoned, and nothing would stand in his way.

Or, at least, that is what Gov. Milorad "Rod" Blagojevich thought right up until the phone rang at 6 A.M. on December 9, 2008, waking him at his home on Chicago's North Side, which he had transformed into the *de facto* capitol of the state of Illinois. That same phone had been his undoing, and at a press conference later that morning, federal investigators outlined a 76-page indictment filed in U.S. district court, which detailed numerous calls made to and from that phone.

In selections from the transcripts of those calls, Governor Blagojevich repeatedly instructed aides to hold up $8 million in state funds for a children's hospital until the head of the hospital coughed up a $50,000 donation to Friends of Blagojevich; discussed using $1.8 billion in state funds as a reward to a public contractor, a road builder, if only he would raise a half-million dollars for the governor's war chest by the end of 2008, when new campaign-finance rules would go into effect; and tried to tie state assistance to the struggling Tribune Company, owner of the *Chicago Tribune* and the Chicago Cubs, to the firing of a writer for the *Tribune* who had penned editorials critical of Blagojevich's conduct as governor.

The press conference was conducted by Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, who had successfully prosecuted Blagojevich's predecessor, Republican Gov. George Ryan, on 18 counts of racketeering and fraud. Ryan had had the good sense to decline to run for reelection as the feds closed the net about him, and so he, like felonious former Democratic governors Dan Walker and Otto Kerner, avoided indictment while still in office.

Blagojevich not only ran for reelection in 2006 knowing that he was being investigated but as late as the day before his arrest declared to reporters that investigators were free to listen to his conversations because he had nothing to hide. Still, the transcripts showed that he was looking for a way out of the governor's office so that he could rehabilitate his reputation—for a run for the presidency in 2016.

Milorad was probably too busy getting his trademark Serbian gangster hairdo coiffed for court that afternoon, but if he had a chance to listen to Fitzgerald's press conference, the man who had consciously modeled himself on Honest Abe was likely cut to the bone when Fitzgerald declared, "The conduct would make Lincoln roll over in his grave." Of course, Rod shares more with Abe than the Brooklyn-born Fitzgerald would like to think. The railmen who bankrolled Lincoln could teach today's blacktop bosses of Illinois a thing or two. And as President, Lincoln didn't need to use financial persuasion to halt criticisms of his conduct; he could—and did—simply sign an executive order for the arrest and imprisonment of "the editors, proprietors, and publishers" of newspapers and prohibit "any further publication therefrom."

No, if Lincoln was doing anything in his grave on December 9, 2008, he was probably thanking the God he didn't believe in that Alexander Graham Bell hadn't invented the telephone until 12 years after his last Good Friday.

Most of Governor Blagojevich's transgressions were politics as usual here in the Land of Lincoln, but Fitzgerald was compelled to act when it became clear that Blago was attempting to sell Barack Obama's soon-to-be-vacant Senate seat to the highest bidder. But what about our new President himself? Time will tell, but some of us in Illinois could not help but chuckle when the President-elect—another politician who modeled himself on Honest Abe—announced that the centerpiece of his New New Deal would be the biggest load of asphalt since the construction of the Interstate Highway System. One thing is certain: The appointment of outgoing Illinois congressman Ray LaHood (R-Blacktop) as transportation secretary had little to do with bipartisanship.

You can take the boy out of Illinois, but you can't take Illinois out of the boy.

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Letter From Carolina

by Clyde Wilson

The Class of '59: Intimations of Mortality and Posterity

Some good folks in my hometown are planning a reunion of my high-school class, which, come June, will have graduated 50 years ago. It was a class of about 500. Three hundred are known, of which 53 are already deceased. (Our average age is 67.) It is a strange and unsettling experience to contemplate the death of people whom I last saw in the flourish of youth, some of whom I had known since the first grade, and some of whom I thought were great in vitality and would probably outlive me. About 200 are as yet untracked, and some of those will doubtless be missing also when the roll is called.

It was the last all-white class in my city. The junior class had already begun token desegregation with one black girl. Most folks looked on that with distaste or apprehension. The more enlightened, who had been to Chapel Hill, felt that it was the correct thing, providing justice to the more deserving of a group that had suffered denial of opportunity and serving to make us look good in the opinion of the United Nations, which good opinion, for some reason, we were supposed to covet. At any rate it was inevitable and, we were assured, would be gradual and limited in scope.

Our class was about 85-percent Carolina Anglo-Celtic (if you count as Anglo-Celtic a number of ancestors who had the good sense to leave Germany in the late 17th and early 18th centuries). About ten percent were carpetbaggers, who were being happily and painlessly civilized, and about five percent Other, perfectly accepted. The high school encompassed the entire white population within the city limits. There were the children of millhands and the children of mill owners. I do not recall any class conflict (although it is true that the snootier of the rich youth had departed for private academies in Virginia or military schools). Standing was based on sex appeal, athletic prowess, sociability, and, a distant fourth, academic achievement. As editor of the school newspaper, unathletic and unclubbable, my status was somewhat indeterminate. I did have on my staff a future lady author of salacious novels and the daughters of a famous poet and a well-known historian. In those quaint days our sports teams were known as the Purple Whirlwinds, or Whirlies for short.

Everybody had kinfolk in World War II and not a few had them in the large section of a cemetery devoted to casualties returned from Europe (like my uncle) or the Pacific. Most, if they had cared to, could claim eligibility in the Sons or Daughters of the Confederacy, and a majority probably in the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution. We had all been raised in the horrific shadow of the atomic Cold War and Korea, where a local fellow had been an ace. We had a certain feigned fecklessness as a result. Vietnam had not yet been heard of. Never in life since have I found the girls sweeter or lovelier.

We were Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, in that order of magnitude. There were a few Jews and Catholics. Many of the first two thought it a sin to go to the movies or a ball game on Sundays, and that one drink was a certain road to Hell (which is sometimes true). There was no parochial high school in town, but there was a large hospital run by the exotic Sisters of Charity. I sold newspapers there every morning and afternoon, and my violently Protestant great-aunt was housemother to the nursing students, almost all of them non-Romanist locals. She would omit the word *catholic* in the Creed the same way some good folks like to omit "one nation indivisible" from the Pledge of Allegiance.

There is no need to wax nostalgic. Wherever there is Man there is sin, suffering, and sorrow, and, as someone has said, youth is greatly overrated. Farmers and workmen, of both races, could still be seen in those days in bib overalls and shirtless, and a few people still came to town in a wagon led by a mule. Most of us children and some adults went barefoot in the summer except to church. A great many older people had a very limited education. Spittoons were common. No question that folks, white and black, enjoy a higher standard of living today—though they also seem a good deal more harried and discontented and somehow alienated in a way not known in poorer times. Spontaneous music making, humor, innate dignity, good manners, and kindness are much rarer now.

Government was in the hands of local gentry, who were generally honest and easy on taxes, which they knew the working majority could ill afford. The two newspapers and one television station were locally owned and reflected, to a considerable extent, local culture and opinion. The lords of industry, if not all local, were all in-state and known. Neighborhoods were segregated, but not as rigidly as in the North. There was much peaceful overlap, especially in the older parts of town and in the rural fringes.

A child lost in any part of town was sure to find help and kindness. At nine or ten years of age I would ride the bus downtown on Saturday and stay all day watching movie serials, dining on hot dogs and Dr. Pepper, and perusing the comic books at the newsstand. It occurred to no one that a child alone might be in any danger, though it was a real city. We had a skyscraper of 17 stories, the tallest in the state, unmatched even by Charlotte. Still, you could not go anywhere in public without encountering someone you knew.

The violent "nonviolent civil-rights protests," for which our city would

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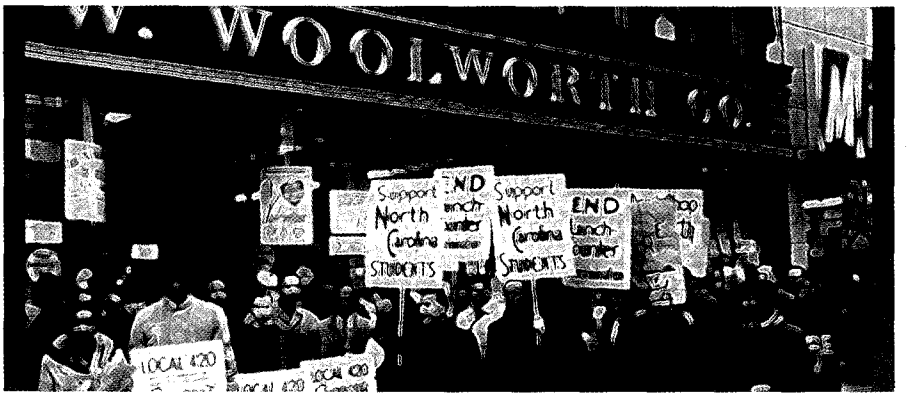

become famous in a few years, had not yet erupted. Ask any police or fire veteran about the "nonviolence." My father trained and captained the first black fire company. His company was not immune to ambush by snipers who were "protesting" by arson. I had enjoyed my white privilege many times at the Woolworth's lunch counter, which Jesse Jackson was about to make world famous for something besides its BLT sandwiches. I have never seen this mentioned anywhere, but just across the street was the site where young Will Porter, later famous as O. Henry, posted his caricatures of the local carpetbagger (of the original sort) in his uncle's drugstore. The carpetbagger, Albion Tourgée, soon went back to New York and published a book called *A Fool's Errand*. A few blocks down, just south of the railroad tracks, was the place where Otto Wood shot the Jewish pawnbroker. As memorialized in the Doc Watson song, Otto later escaped from the state pen and went somewhere out West, where he finally met a lawman with a trigger quicker than his.

My grandfather would undoubtedly be damned today as a "racist," but I saw him more than once feed fatherless black families for free out of the meager proceeds of his semirural grocery store. And as a child in the era of Jim Crow, I enjoyed afternoon naps in the house of his highly respectable black neighbors. It was two stories but had a tin roof, delightful when it rained. I was country when country wasn't cool.

Nobody not blood kin would have told an 18-year-old man, who could be summoned at any time to die for his country, that he could not drink and smoke. Girls had to be more circumspect in public. Marijuana was something we knew about through drive-in movies, and we had never heard of Timothy Leary. Nowadays, those who like that sort of thing and know where to look can find a street corner where they can purchase any kind of mind-altering chemical they want.

We now imitate our superior Northern fellow citizens, declaim the glories of integrated society, and flee to the suburbs or even adjoining counties. Nobody really believes any more in those glories, except in official and media rhetoric. The media portray a city of happy brotherhood that bears no relation to reality. Black people reign in the schools, but their tenure has been brief. It is already giving way to the sovereignty of Mexico, as are whole sections of the city. Hmong, Iranians, Jamaicans, Africans, Chinese, Hindus, and assorted Others are very visible but will doubtless never be able to challenge the Mexicans.

Carpetbaggers are much more numerous today, Rust Belt fugitives, but most live in enclaves with houses worth three or four times what most locals, white or black, can afford. In fact, everybody is from somewhere else, and everything—newspaper, television, business—is controlled from somewhere else. The streets have a feel of tension and barely suppressed racial hostility like a big Northern city. All are strangers, and the only local culture and opinion and tradition that survive are found in the small towns and country where the natives have fled. Not long ago one could not step too far out of town in any direction without finding tobacco fields, corn, cotton. Now the subdivisions stretch on forever, calibrated by income level.

Today local government is largely the plaything of self-anointed black leaders and their accomplices, white public-sector entrepreneurs. Both are invariably corrupt and eager to exploit the votes of those who pay no property taxes for their private profit and entertainment at the expense of the middle and working classes who do pay property taxes. Violent crime is a lot more common than in older days. Black judges and juries, unlike the white judges and juries of earlier times, tend to be lenient about black-on-white crime. But exactly like the white judges and juries of earlier times, they continue to be lenient about black-on-black crime. Of course, any boys who today engaged in the BB gun fights that we used to have would now be prosecuted to the fullest extent of therapy.

And what does it all mean? It seems to me that the current and the rising generations are rich in materiel but increasingly impoverished in their humanity—too impoverished even to know what is missing. That seems to describe what it now means to be an American, once fortune's child in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Our forebears planted trees and built houses that their unseen descendants would enjoy, and worked and fought to bestow the blessings of liberty on their posterity. Americans long ago abandoned that sort of backwardness to become people of the Now. It is "un-American" even to think about posterity or to consider the future except as a utopia of universal prosperity, equality, and technological wonder. Those of us who are not good "Americans" have to fear for posterity. But Christians have a duty to hope for the best, and no one knows what turns history will take. When I see my sturdy grandson taking his first bold steps, I know it has been and is yet worthwhile to hope.

Contributing editor Clyde Wilson is a retired professor of history at the University of South Carolina.

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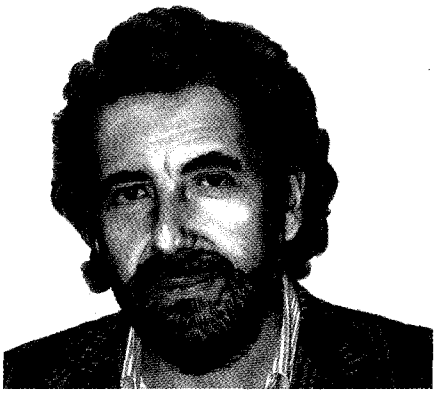
by Andrei Navrozov

The Prism's Prison



Sometimes it seems that I have become the master of a single plaintive note, sung by the disembodied voice of the patron saint of grasshoppers, Marie Antoinette, from somewhere beyond the tomb. And it is true that often, when I reread whatever I have written, I am reminded of Russian dictionaries of *fenya*, or for that matter of English dictionaries of cant, where just about every word in the criminal argot that is a verb means "to steal," and nearly every noun is translated as "passive homosexual." Yet that's what these people do and are, when out of prison and in prison respectively. Blame it on their extraordinary lifestyle, if you like, that conventional language is blind to the kaleidoscopic subtleties of the Proudhonian notion of property, or of the Wildean idea of a good time.

Accordingly, conventional exegesis of love, which strikes many as monotonous, has always struck me as lacking in nuance; I suppose it's never monotonous enough for my money, dealing as it does in everything under the sun except the earth I want, or anyway the earth I long to hear described. "People love for amusement, for fashion's sake, for revenge, for riches; in order to forget, or to excite envy; sometimes to find happiness; but hardly ever to find love," wrote Etienne Rey, an unjustly forgotten French aphorist of a century ago. The writers have tended to follow the distracted lovers, and the readers were left to follow the distracted writers.

One must have the pathfinder's ear for the polyphony of the forest. Then the wind in the branches, which seems to reverberate with one single deafening note of abandonment all the night long, will recede and die down, revealing subtle shades of meaning it has been obscuring. One must persevere, waiting for some inner prism to break up what seems like a monochrome of white light into a rainbow of significant color. Then the rogue verb will take on a life of its own—a woman's purse and a man's wallet being so very unlike each other—while the inmate noun will acquire the thousand senses of loneliness and frustration otherwise unknown to those who imagine that having laces is a God-given right of their bench-made English shoes.

"Under communism," went a popular quip of my childhood days, "we're going to order things by telephone and receive them by television." The claustrophobic atmosphere of hopelessness, which hung over the predicament in which I had found myself during my Venetian sojourn at the close of the 1990's, was likewise almost funny, in the sense that a drunk accused of drunk driving, upon finding himself in a prison cell for the night, may think the situation quite funny for as long as the effects of alcohol have not worn off.

On the one hand, even Marie Antoinette would probably have agreed that there was nothing terribly serious, that is to say life-threatening or emotionally devastating, about the plight of a person who had got himself lost in a labyrinth of his own devising; as the inveterate faro players of Versailles knew only too well, any given game is bound to get out of hand once in a while, and on the face of it the opening punts of my marriage would not have seemed out of place on the playing fields of green baize. But, on the other hand, as the martyred queen of the grasshoppers could be persuaded to see—if only I could have an hour's *tête-à-tête* with her in the Petit Trianon!—in love as in life, it is only volition that matters. It is the absurd and fraudulent promise of all realizable desire that the Russian quip ridiculed, not only the ludicrous implausibility of ever seeing it realized under Soviet communism, or French absolutism, or any other political system.

I had conceived a lifelong caprice whose name, I thought, was love. When it transpired that my sacred volition with respect to the realization of this caprice had found itself waterlogged in an island cul-de-sac of torpid brine and Istrian stone, weighed down by fatherhood and motherhood, nostalgia and acedia, I felt defeated, cheated, emasculated, made a fool of by a bunch of cardsharps. And these feelings, to me, meant the world and were the world.

"Don't you know there are people starving in Africa?" ran another quip I vaguely recall having laughed at in my American adolescence, with the heartless punch line in attendance: "Name one!" No doubt, that world of mine was subjective to the point of sheer and utter callousness. Even in its own terms of reference, a random sympathizer, such as a wedding guest looking for a gift to add to the matrimonial treasure trove, could find many virtues inherent in it that many a married man might envy: a comely wife, perfect health, a clever and handsome child, plenty of money, few responsibilities and even fewer obligations, palatial residence on the Grand Canal, bibulous evenings and ebullient nights . . .

Certainly this wedding gift list, with a triumphant tick in the margin against each object of desire, would have looked impressive to the parents and friends of many a young couple. But the groom's volition had gone into liquidation, and the mixed feelings of desecration, claustrophobia, and disillusionment outweighed by a great gross whatever the most generous sympathizer could throw on the scales.

Would you have shed a tear for the inmate of so cushy a prison cell? Not very likely, I wager. ◁

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by Srdja Trifkovic

The North Worth Saving

"Defeat in detail" is a military concept that denotes the rout of an enemy by dividing and destroying segments of his forces one by one, instead of engaging his entire strength. A brilliant example was Stonewall Jackson's 1862 Shenandoah Valley campaign, when his force of 17,000 beat three mutually unsupported Union commands almost four times his strength.

The concept is as old as Sun Tzu ("if enemy forces are united, separate them") and was more recently restated by Mao ("concentrate a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one"). It is highly relevant to the American interest because the civilization upon which this country is founded—usually described as "Western," although "Northern" would be more accurate—is in danger of being defeated in detail by its enemies, internal and external.

The problem was aptly summarized by Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, in an interview with *Russia Today* on November 18:

> There is a new civilization emerging in the Third World that thinks that the white, northern hemisphere has always oppressed it and must therefore fall at its feet now. . . . If the northern civilization wants to protect itself, it must be united: America, the European Union, and Russia. If they are not together, they will be defeated one by one.

Rogozin's statement reflects a profound understanding of the biological, cultural and spiritual commonalities shared by one billion Europeans and their overseas descendants in the "white, northern hemisphere"—an understanding as accurate as it is odious to the Western elite class.

It indicates that, in some important respects, Russia is freer than the United States or the European Union: No American or Western European diplomat of his rank would dare make such a statement, even if he shared the sentiment—or hope to remain in his post after making it.

And finally, it correctly diagnoses the attitude of the Third World to the northern civilization as inherently adversarial, based on the myth of the latter's oppressiveness and on the expectation of its eventual collapse.

Europe's demographic self-annihilation is well advanced, from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond, with Russia and the rest of the Old Continent sharing the same downward trend. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's population has fallen six percent, from around 150 million to just over 140 million. The combination of a low birthrate, an aging population, and a public-health crisis may result in the country's population collapsing by one third, to around 100 million, by 2050. On current form, there will be a 40-percent drop in the size of the core (ages 14 to 25) group, ensuring a continued decline for the rest of the century. At the same time, the number of self-identified Muslims in Russia has risen by 40 percent in the last 15 years to 20 million, partly fueled by immigration from Central Asia and the Caucasus.

In Metropolitan France, an ostensibly healthy birthrate of 12.2 per thousand conceals the fact that, of some 800,000 births in a nation of almost 60 million, Muslim immigrants (predominantly from North Africa) and their French-born descendants account for more than a quarter. Italy will plummet from today's 57 million to a much older 40 million by 2050. By that time, the continent as a whole will face a net loss of some 150 million people. Europe's population has aged to such a degree that it will continue to shrink even in the unlikely event that birthrates rebound to the replacement level. This "negative momentum" means that even if women in the future should have an unexpected fertility increase to two children on average, the population would be destined to continue shrinking.

In the 1970's, the U.S. birthrate not only dipped below replacement but fell below the European rate. In the years since, the American rate recovered modestly to just below replacement level. The fertility rate of white Americans slipped below the replacement rate in the early 1970's, however, and it never recovered: Today it stands at about 1.8 babies per woman. Demographers say that the U.S. population will grow by 135 million in the next four decades—a stunning 44-percent increase—but that growth will be entirely the result of immigration (overwhelmingly from the Third World) and increases in the nonwhite population.

In Russia, Rogozin's thesis is disputed by two very different groups. The Westernizers—insignificant in numbers but influential in the country's intelligentsia—reject the notion that Russia can be, or should aspire to be, an equal partner of Europe and America unless and until she is reformed in their image. The Eurasianists, by contrast, see Russia's destiny in the great continental heartland and in strategic partnership with her southern and southeastern neighbors. They believe that Russia's interests and those of the United States are inherently divergent. In their view, détente with Islam is more desirable than cooperation with the West. As Aleksandr Dugin says, the new Eurasian empire should

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be based on the rejection of Atlanticism and liberalism: "[T]his common civilizational impulse will be the basis of a political and strategic union" between Russia and the Heartland, the Slavs and the Turkic peoples of the Central Asian steppe.

Continental conservatives—German Christian Democrats; French, Spanish, and Italian rightists—are natural Northerners even when they are squeamish about admitting it. Members of the dominant European left, however, are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about Barack Obama because they are ashamed of their own roots and looks. The sentiment is becoming all-pervasive: Even *The Economist* opined that Obama's victory "would salve, if not close, the ugly wound left by America's history." The left flatly denies that a common Euro-Russo-American civilization exists, let alone that it is worth preserving or jointly defending.

It is in the United States that the obstacles to a northern paradigm are the most formidable. Opponents are present, to some extent, in every influential segment of this country's foreign-policy community.

American exceptionalists believe that the United States differs qualitatively from Europe (not to mention Russia) by virtue of her "propositional credo," which transcends the shackles of ethnicity, race, culture, and faith.

Global hegemonists seek dominance over Europe and fragmentation of Russia, rather than partnership with them. Many hegemonists are also visceral Russophobes, owing to their own ethno-cultural baggage rather than any objective assessment of Moscow's global position and impact on U.S. interests. Obama's selection of Joe Biden as his Vice President, Hillary Clinton's appointment to State, Robert Gates' retention at the Pentagon, and General Jones's management of the National Security Council point to the President's willful blindness to the collapsing economic foundation of the American "hyperpower."

Multiculturalists oppose any notion of "our" physical or cultural space that does not belong to everyone. They deny that we should have a special affinity for any particular country, nation, race, or culture, but demand the imposition of our preferences upon the whole world. They are the mortal enemy of any notion that any shared legacy of the European family is worthy of preservation.

These groups share the radical notion that America is not a real country, but a metaphysical concept or a tool for their own Will to Power—or both. They do not want this country to belong to the people whose ancestors created her and who have inhabited her for generations. They celebrate the resulting random mélange of mutually disconnected multitudes as somehow uniquely "American" and virtuous.

Ideologues will deny it, but in the decades to come Europe, Russia, and America will be in similar mortal peril from those very multitudes. The magnitude of that threat will become clear as those nations age and the numbers of hostile aliens grow. In the end there will be no grand synthesis, no cross-fertilization, and certainly no peaceful coexistence, between the North and the Third World.

The short-term prospects for fostering a sense of unity among Europeans—Eastern, Western, and American—are dim and will remain so for as long as the regimes of all the major states of the West are controlled by an elite class hostile to its own biological roots and cultural fruits.

In the longer term, however, it is at least conceivable that the ongoing financial and economic crisis will produce salutary political and cultural effects. In the face of diminished property values, rising unemployment, and collapsed retirement portfolios, our elites risk a comprehensive loss of credibility and authority comparable to that experienced by Europe's ruling class in 1914-18. When the dust settles they may no longer be heeded as arbiters of who we are, what we are to think, and how we are to lead a good life. As the credibility of American global dominance tanks with the dollar, Europe may increasingly see its interests tracking with those of Russia, forcing Washington to acquiesce.

No refocusing of international policy will matter if there is not a reversal of demographic and immigration trends. The richer the country, the emptier its cradles. A trend toward Third World living standards may lead to Third World birthrates. Increased scarcity may finally break the political taboo about addressing non-European immigration.

Can we hope that a reminder of the harsher realities of life will revive the North's sense of itself as a Christian civilization and resistance to the stealth *jihad* being waged in our midst? Sadly, the more likely result of the crisis we now face is deepening demoralization, increased demands for government solutions and services, and ever more inane adulation of such purveyors of political snake oil as our newly elected President Messiah.

Our defeat is by no means preordained, because nothing in history is preordained. In the early eighth century the triumphant march of Islam into Christendom seemed unstoppable, until it was halted at the gates of Constantinople (718) and at Tours (732). Conversely, in July 1914, Europe was at the peak of every imaginable human achievement.

Much of this depends on leadership. Can we find political leaders who will serve as catalysts for social regeneration? If there are any Dmitry Rogozins lurking in the corridors of American and European politics, this would be a good time for them to step forward.

Rogozin's position on the essential dilemma of our time coincides with what I have repeatedly advocated in these pages over the past decade: a paradigm shift in the West that would pave the way for a genuine Northern Alliance of Russia, Europe, and North America, as all three face similar existential threats in the decades ahead.

In an uncertain and ever more brutal world, the Northerners may finally consider banding together, lest they be defeated in detail. I do not know if and when they will do so. I do know that, if they don't, the best and greatest civilization the world has known will be finished for ever. ©

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Lincoln and God

by Joseph E. Fallon

Before the first shots were fired in the U.S. Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln had begun to style himself as an instrument of the Lord. But as William H. Herndon, a law partner and Lincoln biographer, wrote, "[t]he very idea that he was in the hands of an invisible, irresistible, and inevitable deaf power which moved as an omnipotent force evidently harassed and worried him." At the same time, "the very idea" afforded Lincoln immunity from responsibility for the acts he had committed or would commit. Addressing the New Jersey Senate at Trenton on February 21, 1861, Lincoln declared:

> I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle [the Revolutionary War].

This was all the more remarkable because Lincoln was a nonbeliever. His first law partner, John T. Stuart, stated that Lincoln

> was an avowed and open infidel . . . and sometimes bordered on atheism. . . . [He] went further against Christian beliefs and doctrines and principles than any man I ever heard; he shocked me.

Ward Lamon, another law partner and friend of Lincoln, relates that,

> [a]s he grew older, he grew more cautious. . . . The imputation of Infidelity had seriously injured him in several of his earlier political contests; and, sobered by age and experience, he was resolved that the same imputation should injure him no more. Aspiring to lead religious communities, he foresaw that he must not appear as an enemy within their gates; aspiring to public honors under the auspices of a political party which persistently summoned religious people to assist in the extirpation of that which it denounced as the "nation's sin," he foresaw that he could not ask their suffrages whilst aspersing their faith. He perceived no reason for changing his convictions, but he did perceive many good and cogent reasons for not making them public.

Herndon concurred:

> Lincoln was very politic, and a very shrewd man in some particulars. When he was talking to a Christian, he adapted himself to the Christian. . . . I could state facts about Mr. Lincoln's jokes on and gibes at Christianity and committee of ministers, who waited on him while President of the United States, and before, that would shock a Christian people.

On August 12, 1861, as Ft. Sumter was being attacked, Lincoln issued a Proclamation of a National Day of Fast. He was explicit on who started the war:

> And, whereas, when our own beloved Country, once, by the blessing of God, united, prosperous and happy, is now afflicted with faction and civil war, it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation.

Lincoln then broadened the blame to all Americans. They were sinners who had offended God, and the war was His retribution:

> [I]n sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before Him, and to pray for His mercy,—to pray that we may be spared further punishment, though most justly deserved.

For Lincoln to call upon people to pray to God to end the war was all the more extraordinary, as it contradicted his personal beliefs. According to Herndon, Lincoln

> believed that both matter and mind are governed by certain irrefragable and irresistible laws, and that no prayers of ours could arrest their operation in the least . . . what was to be would be. . . . [T]he laws of human nature are persistent and permanent and could not be reversed. . . . In proof of his strong leaning towards fatalism he once quoted the case of Brutus and Caesar, arguing that the former was forced by laws and conditions over which he had no control to kill the latter, and *vice versa*, that the latter was specially created to be disposed of by the former.

Throughout his presidency, Lincoln maintained that God alone was responsible for the war. In his September 3, 1862, "Meditation on the Divine Will," he wrote:

> God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the con-

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test proceeds.

Lincoln continued in the same vein in an October 26, 1862, letter to Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney:

> We are indeed going through a great trial—a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will . . . but if after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise. If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced; If I had been allowed my way this war would have been ended before this, but we find it still continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us.

As the war dragged on from one bloody encounter to the next from Manassas to Antietam to Shiloh with no end in sight, the President's unbelief, both in God and his own rhetoric, was evident in private correspondence. His letter of November 24, 1862, to Carl Shurz is petty and childish in its attempt to evade responsibility:

> I certainly know that if the war fails, the administration fails, and that I will be blamed for it, whether I deserve it or not. And I ought to be blamed, if I could do better. You think I could do better; therefore you blame me already. I think I could not do better; therefore I blame you for blaming me.

Nonetheless, Lincoln continued to repeat his accusation against God on public occasions. In a proclamation on March 30, 1863, designating another National Day of Fast, he wrote:

> And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?

With victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, some in the North thought the war would soon end. But in an August 26, 1863, letter to James C. Conkling, Lincoln disagreed, reiterating that God, not he, determined when there would be peace.

> Still let us not be over-sanguine of a speedy final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result.

In his Proclamation of Thanksgiving on October 3, 1863, Lincoln left any question of a timetable in the hands of "our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens":

> I . . . fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and Union.

As the number of dead and maimed mounted, and an official policy of total war was pursued against Southern civilians, Lincoln persisted in denying any responsibility for his own acts. He was a victim of circumstance, and circumstance was determined by God. In his April 4, 1864, letter to Albert G. Hodges, Lincoln declared

> I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years of struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it.

He continued bizarrely asserting that the death of over 600,000 Americans would be a testament to God's righteousness.

> If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Lincoln assiduously promoted the

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idea that, while he was blameless for the war, its death and destruction served some higher good. As he wrote to Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney in a letter dated September 4, 1864:

> The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best and has ruled otherwise. . . . Surely, He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay.

By March 1865, the war was fast coming to an end. But in his Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, Lincoln ominously insisted that God might want the bloodshed to continue indefinitely.

> The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offences cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Loving God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether." . . . [W]ith firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.

Through use of such rhetoric about a righteous and triumphant God, Lincoln exploited religious feelings in the North to carry out a four-year war against Southern civilians. Women, children, the sick, and the elderly were targeted; homes and cities burned; crops destroyed; and domestic animals slaughtered. Lincoln's influence on the North validated Voltaire's observation that "Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities."

Joseph E. Fallon writes from Rye, New York.

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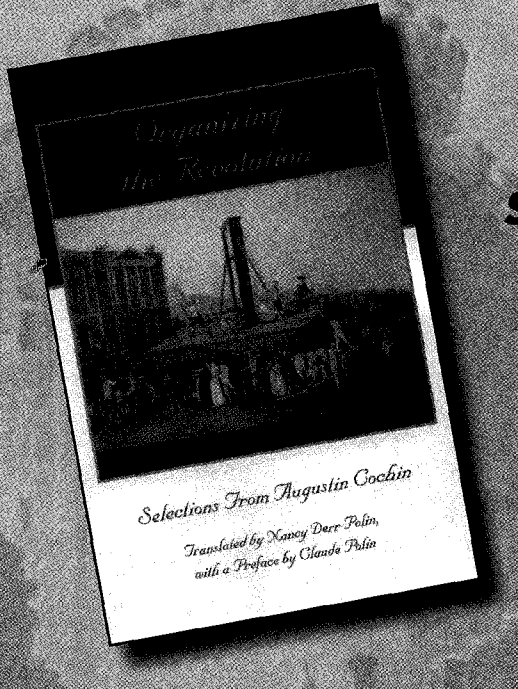
Organizing the Revolution
Selections From Augustin Cochin
Translated by Nancy Derr Polin, with a Preface by Claude Polin

Organizing the Revolution

Selections From Augustin Cochin

translated by Nancy Derr Polin

Preface by Claude Polin

Augustin Cochin (1876-1916) undertook a minute analysis of the role that provincial clubs and societies played in the genesis of the French Revolution. His work shows clearly how the revolution was organized long before the events of 1789. This translation is an attempt to present his unfinished writings in a clear and coherent form.

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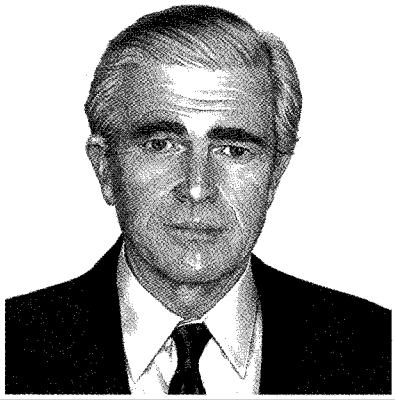
by George McCartney

I Gave Them a Sword



Frost/Nixon
Produced by Imagine Entertainment and Studio Canal
Directed by Ron Howard
Screenplay by Peter Morgan
Distributed by Universal Pictures

On August 9, 1974, the day Richard Nixon officially resigned from the presidency, I discovered just how rabid political hatred could become short of taking up arms. I was in my faculty cubicle after teaching a summer class. From the hallway, I heard two professors, both feminists, cackling uncontrollably: "Oh, God, they got that sonofabitch, they got him," one was chortling between gasps. "Yeah, they really, really did," the other agreed after catching her breath. "But," she continued, "I won't be happy until they get his daughters too-oo." Pealing, shrieking hysteria bounced off the prefab metal walls of our cheaply constructed quarters.

Nixon was everything leftists hated. Over the years he had fed their hatred, and the more he did, the more insatiable it became. Even today, there are some who will never get enough Nixon to kick around. They couldn't forgive him for defeating Helen Gahagan Douglas, film actor Melvyn's socialist wife, in 1948. He had called her The Pink Lady—pink down to her underwear. (Nixon, alas, didn't know when to stop.) They resented him for helping to expose Alger Hiss, especially after it had become blazingly obvious that Hiss had been lying when he so urbanely denied being a Soviet agent while serving in FDR's state department. Worse, Nixon had hurled his accusations at Hiss in tones that expressed his middle-class contempt for the entitled rich boy who had used his connections to betray his country. They blamed Nixon for the Vietnam War as if he had started it, conveniently exonerating Kennedy and Johnson. When Nixon attempted to negotiate a peace with Hanoi without risking America's position in the world, the left went screaming into the streets. Who was this war criminal to talk about peace with honor? And how they abhorred his bourgeois mentality, his tidy American family, his American-flag lapel pin, his thoughtful hesitancy when speaking. And those photo ops of him walking along the beach as if he were a Kennedy! The bastard was wearing wingtips, for godsakes! A man who wears wingtips on the beach must be a fascist.

There was little Nixon could do about all this. He knew he was not a political natural like Jack Kennedy. He envied his rival's spontaneity and laboriously tried to script it into his public appearances, everything from formal speeches to casual meet-and-greets. Consequently, when he appeared in public, everything he said seemed contrived, for the very good reason that it was. He only had to open his mouth and say, "Good evening, my fellow Americans," in his basso-profundo rumble, and people felt he was lying even when they knew he wasn't. Throughout his career he wrote pep talks to himself. In January 1970, he put down the following: "Add element of lift to each appearance. . . . Hard work—Imagination—Compassion—Leadership—Understanding the young. . . . Lift spirit of people—Pithy, memorable phrases." Like F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, he was trying to become his own Platonic conception of himself. And like Gatsby, unfortunately, this made him seem slightly ridiculous at times.

I think the women I'd overheard in 1974 were in the Loew's Lincoln Center movie theater last week when I attended the afternoon showing of Ron Howard's film adaptation of Peter Morgan's play *Frost/Nixon*. And they seemed to have brought a legion of their friends. There was that same self-congratulatory cackling, albeit in a deeper register, multiplied 30 or 40 times over. They had come to revel in Morgan's dramatization of the interviews Nixon had granted British chat-show impresario David Frost three years after leaving office. They were especially moved to derision during the scenes that featured the Nixon family together. They comically hissed at the spectacle of Nixon's wife, Pat, his daughters, and their husbands pulling for the former President to do well on camera. Such gloating merriment confirms that there's generally a grain of truth in every paranoiac's fears. Nixon spent his career looking over his shoulder for enemies. This audience proved his suspicion justified. Though he's been dead 14 years, these enemies continue to dance on his grave whenever the opportunity arises. And Howard's film provides ample opportunity, although it also arouses, perhaps unintentionally, sympathy.

The Frost interviews are an example of the dubious practice of checkbook journalism. Both men stood to profit substantially from the exercise should it prove sufficiently titillating to the world audience. For starters, Nixon was paid $600,000 for his performance, with $200,000 up front. He was also contractually entitled to 20 percent of the profits derived from the show's exhibition, a detail the film leaves out, the first of its many evasions and distortions. Why leave it out? The film wants to entertain us with the spectacle of Frost taking Nixon down in its third act when,

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having finally been cornered with damaging evidence, Mr. Disgraced President at last admits his guilt for the "wrongdoing" (Frost's gentlemanly term) of Watergate. If the film were clearer about how much more Nixon stood to profit beyond his initial fee, the audience might be less impressed with the David-and-Goliath template Morgan pressed upon his material. They might suspect Nixon of spicing the interviews with a seeming confession, couching his words in the language of sincere contrition for "mistakes" made under extraordinary "pressure" during a time of political turbulence. And I think they'd be right. The interviews were a bonanza for Frost and Nixon, and Howard's film promises to reward Frost handsomely once more. Although he granted Morgan permission to use the transcripts *gratis*, he's taken the occasion to publish a book on the interviews and release the original footage on DVD.

The interviews came at a crucial moment in the careers of both men. Frost had enjoyed some success on American television in the 60's and early 70's until Westinghouse Broadcasting dropped his show. This ambitious fellow found himself relegated to television in London and Sydney. Frost didn't like these smaller venues at all. Nixon was to be his American comeback. For his part, the former President had spent three years nursing his wounds in San Clemente after being hounded from office and wanted his own comeback. He hoped to regain at least something of his former luster as a statesman.

Although Morgan notes the self-serving nature of the enterprise, he pretends it has historical clout nevertheless. He shapes the interviews as if they were a succession of boxing rounds, with the last one climaxing with a TKO that leaves Nixon on the ropes thoroughly battered and conceding he let down the American people and the American system of government. But this falsifies things considerably. Nixon's concession came two thirds of the way through the interviews, and he stayed in the fight after making it. This has at least two implications, both damaging to Morgan's credibility. First, while the original transcript strongly suggests Frost had discomfited Nixon with the evidence that he knew about Watergate and its cover-up earlier than he had acknowledged previously, the president had the courage to face the music and go on dancing. Nixon's response to Frost's evidence was masterly. He put the matter into a contrite perspective that notes its seriousness without for a moment suggesting it was a crime—only poor judgment under fire. Second, had Nixon felt undone by this exchange, he could have pulled up stakes and let Frost return to London to stew in his jugged hare. But, no, Nixon continued for another three sessions. This suggests that the interrogation went the way Nixon had expected and, perhaps, even desired. It's reasonable to believe that this carefully prepared man wanted a public accounting. It would enable him to own up to his errors while rendering them pardonable in the eyes of the public.

There are other problems with Morgan's dramatization. During the segment devoted to Vietnam, Nixon reminds Frost that he didn't start the war but rather inherited it. When Frost demands to know why he continued to fight it, Nixon retorts that honor left him no choice. "I coulda bugged out and maybe I woulda won myself a medal from some small Scandinavian country," he sneers and goes on to point out the dangerous consequences of instant surrender. Then, he sums up: "In a way you could say I'm the last casualty of Vietnam." This claim would be breathtaking, even immorally self-serving, had Nixon made it—but he hadn't. The transcript reveals that the words "last casualty" were spoken by Frost:

> Frost: If the Vietnam War had not gone on throughout your presidency, there probably would have been less, much less, domestic discord, . . . and many of the so-called abuses of power might never have occurred or come to light or been necessary. In that sense, . . . perhaps you were the last American casualty of the Vietnam War.
>
> Nixon: A case could be made for that, yes.

Morgan's rewrite is an unconscionable distortion. Here's another: When Nixon learns that Frost was once engaged to Diahann Carroll, he wrinkles his nose and asks, "She's black, isn't she?" So Nixon was a racist, right? Wrong. Nixon's policies regarding blacks were unusually farsighted for a Republican of his generation. He insisted, for instance, on strategies for desegregating schools, his only "sin" being that he wanted to achieve this goal without resorting to forced out-of-district busing.

I'll leave it at this: Although Morgan makes it look like he's being fair to the media's favorite monster president, he's not. Justice for Nixon is still not where the money is.

As for the film's acting, it's about as faithful as Morgan's ellipses and alterations. I can't imagine that Michael Sheen believed he was impersonating Frost. He plays him with a boyish edge-of-the-seat eagerness completely alien to Frost's drawling, languorous I'm-a-Cambridge-graduate demeanor. This son of a Methodist minister has never exhibited the ferret-like, go-getting intensity Sheen displays. As Nixon, Frank Langella seems to be doing an impression of David Fry doing an impression of Nixon. He hunches his shoulders, shambles flat-footedly, flings his arms about as if they were unhinged semaphores, and growls sonorously in registers lower than those previously visited by the human voice. Yet, to be fair, at moments Langella does manage to convey the man's pathos and wit. He certainly has the funniest lines, and he delivers them with quiet delight. Few people in the theater seemed to be laughing, however.

At the film's faux climax, Nixon tells Frost, "I gave [my enemies] a sword, and they stuck it in and they twisted it with relish." They're still twisting it. ◁

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Treasure Mountain

In the elation and excitement produced by Héctor's interview with the *curandera*, he and Jesús "Eddie" could barely resist the impulse to start at once for Ladron Peak. A late-winter storm of unusual force for central New Mexico restored them to their senses, blanketing the peak and the mountains to the southwest and east in snow and immobilizing the city of Belen for thirty-six hours. Each time Héctor's eyes were drawn—as happened at least a dozen times a day now—to the whited silhouette of Ladron, he thanked the Lord Jesus that he and Jesús "Eddie" had not been caught out on its slopes, with nothing to protect them from the elements but Jesús's pickup truck and a nylon tent. After consulting the *Farmer's Almanac*, they set a tentative date for sometime in late April, when the threat of serious cold had passed and before the summer heat set in, for the start of the expedition.

Hermana Carmen Cortez (as the business card taped beside the doorbell read) had fulfilled Héctor's worst misgivings. Whether or not she was actually aged a hundred, as Jesús "Eddie" had claimed, she was, without doubt, the ugliest human being Héctor had ever beheld. As a small child, he'd been taken to visit a museum in Mexico where the family had been shown an exhibit of mummified babies in a glass case. Carmen Cortez looked like that only bigger, except for a fall of hair dyed a hideous purplish color with highlights added to it. The darkened room was lined with hanging sheaves of dried herbs and shelves on which bottles, vials, and canisters were arranged in rows. A fire of piñon pine logs burned in the fireplace, perfuming the close atmosphere, and a ponderous table built of age-darkened wood occupied the center space. On the walls between the shelves hung portraits of various Catholic saints. Behind the table Carmen Cortez herself sat in a high-backed chair, mercifully difficult to distinguish at first glance, owing to the dim light thrown by a dozen votive candles and the dropped rattan blinds at the windows. Héctor was speechless, but the *curandera* lost no time getting to the point.

"Beatriz tells me you are not here to be cured, that you wish for something else from me. What is it that you want, then? You don't look very well to me." The voice, coming from so fragile a figure, was astonishingly strong.

Spotting a vague shape in the gloom that had the general aspect of a chair, Héctor lowered himself upon it and found that he had surmised correctly.

"I am told you have the power of sight, Señora Cortez," he began. "I am looking for something terribly important."

"*Hermana* Carmen . . . And just what is it that you seek? Beatriz Juárez assured me you are not a Catholic."

"No, Hermana. First Assembly of God."

Héctor recounted for her the legend of the buried treasure, aware for the first time in the telling how improbable, even silly, the entire business sounded. Hermana Carmen, however, appeared to take him seriously.

"We will see what we will see," she told him. "You have brought a map of the treasure mountain with you?"

Héctor drew the folded 7.5-minute quadrangle map, prepared by the National Geological Survey and including Ladron Peak and vicinity, from his coat pocket and passed it across the table to the *curandera*, offering as he did so silent thanks to Jesús "Eddie" for his foresightedness. Héctor on his own would never have thought to bring a topographic map, with Ladron Peak conveniently marked on it with an X, along with him to the appointment.

The *curandera* took the map and studied it. In the half-dark, Héctor was unable to observe her expression as she did this.

"Ladron Peak is a place of bad magic," she said at last. "Many evil spirits are about there. They are certain to be guarding the treasure."

"Yes, but—where exactly *is* the treasure?" Héctor asked impatiently.

Hermana Carmen refolded the map carefully on the table. She drew a rosary from the bosom of her dress and placed her hands on top of the map, clasping the string of shocking-pink plastic beads. She closed her eyes and sat that way, moving her lips silently as she told her beads, for what seemed to Héctor a very long time, until he was certain she had dozed off and was talking now in her sleep. He was on the point of knocking the edge of the desk to awaken her when suddenly she set aside the rosary, unfolded the map again, and spread it wide on the desktop. Finally the *curandera* jabbed the map violently with her right forefinger and opened her eyes wide. Héctor watched this performance in dismay. His mother had employed the same trick, using her Bible, whenever she had an important decision to make. But this was supposed to be magic!

Carmen Cortez removed her finger from the map and marked the spot with a red crayon. Then she pushed the map across the table to Héctor for his inspection. However, as he had no experience in reading topographic maps, the indicated site told him nothing.

"There you will find the treasure," the *curandera* asserted, "hidden long ago by the Apache. You must search for a boulder split in two by a bolt

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of lightning and smelling of sulphur, and dig ten feet underneath it on the downhill side. Two hundred and fifty dollars, please."

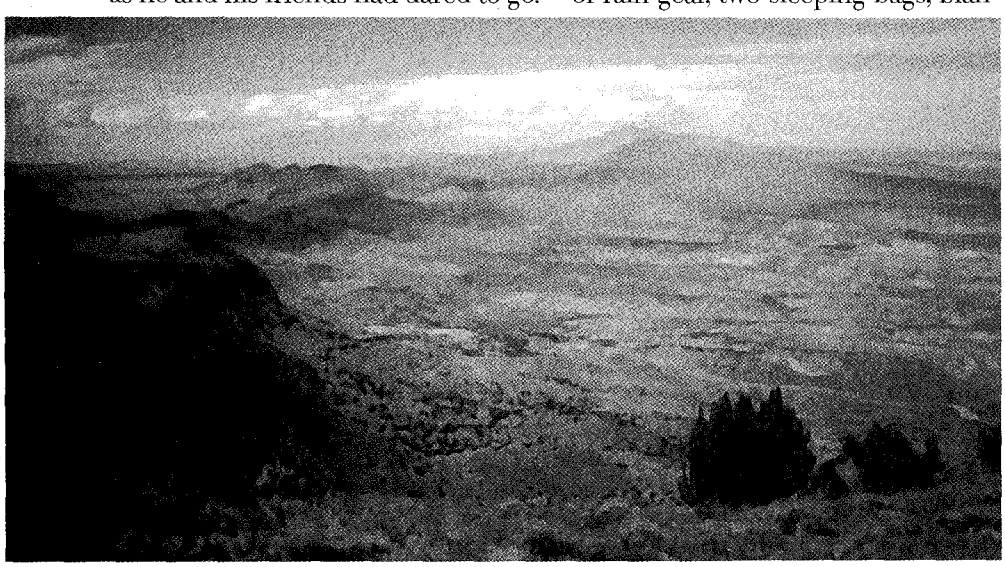
"But—Beatriz said it would be more like twenty-five! And my wife has the checkbook."

"I take the card," Hermana Carmen assured him.

On his way out, Héctor brushed against a man going past him into the adobe house. In the darkness of the unlit street he failed to see the face clearly, but even so he didn't like the little he saw. The man looked like a treasure hunter to him.

The winter, which had been an exceptionally cold one, hung on a good deal later than usual that year. It was already the second week in May when the treasure hunters, encouraged at first by a burst of warm weather and finally overjoyed when it appeared that summer had arrived to stay, decided on the following weekend to launch their assault upon Ladron Peak. According to Jesús "Eddie," the *curandera's* X mark was placed high on the mountain at the head of a dry canyon running southeast for many miles into the desert, and Héctor, having no alternative, was willing to take his word for it. As a younger man, in his teens and twenties when he was still in shape, Jesús "Eddie" had spent much time exploring the peak, circumnavigating its extensive base by four-wheel-drive and climbing on foot as high on its precipitous slopes as he and his friends had dared to go. The treasure location, Jesús had assured his friend, was indeed a perilous one, ensuring that an attempt upon it would be fraught with many dangers, including sheer drops of hundreds of feet, gravel and talus slides, falling boulders, bad footing, rotten rock, and lightning strikes. Though Jesús "Eddie" was cavalier about these dangers, they gave Héctor pause. However, partly from pride, but mainly from treasure-lust, he tried not to show his discomfiture and determined to stick his courage in the screwing-place, as he'd heard somewhere of someone having once done. In fact, the prospect of his impending encounter with Ladron Peak was considerably less daunting than that of informing AveMaría of the planned adventure. If only, Héctor reflected, women had been blessed with more imagination!

Although he had already met his responsibilities by discovering the precise location of the treasure, Héctor was more than happy to aid Jesús "Eddie" in acquiring the gear they needed for the expedition. Jesús had made a list back in March, but, as new items of an indispensable nature continued to occur to the two of them, the list was now extensive. Beginning with Jesús "Eddie's" Dodge pickup and his igloo tent, it included one set of tire chains and a sheepherder jack, one pickaxe, two shovels, and a handsaw, one hatchet, a Leatherman multitool, one kerosene and one electric lantern, 500 feet of nylon rope, two sets of rain gear, two sleeping bags, blankets, one 10x16 canvas tarp and two pillows, two hunting knives, a .44 Magnum and a .45-caliber revolver, a .270-caliber hunting rifle equipped with an adjustable 2x9-power scope, a Dutch oven, two cigarette lighters for starting fires and a box of Blue Diamond wooden matches, two picnic coolers, four cases of beer, and three bottles of blended Scotch. At Héctor's suggestion, Jesús "Eddie" added two antivenin kits, though he insisted that rattlesnakes did not venture to such high elevations as the two of them would be exploring.



Ten days before the expedition was to set out, Héctor did whatever it is one is supposed to do with one's courage and informed AveMaría of the treasure quest. He chose for the occasion an intimate steak dinner at the Golden Corral, his wife's favorite restaurant, after the two of them had left Contracepción and Dubya at home to fend for themselves with a box of microwaveable beef burritos and a quart of chocolate ice cream. Whether owing to wifely gratitude or to the romantic atmosphere, AveMaría, greatly to Héctor's surprise, offered no objection whatever to his adventure, which seemed rather to appeal to her imagination. As a fervent admirer of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, she had no difficulty imagining her husband as Humphrey Bogart, "lusting for the treasure that cursed them all the more he yearned for a woman's arms" (as AveMaría remembered the line went). So far from considering the affair a wild-goose chase, she appeared even more confident than he of both the existence of the treasure and the likelihood that Héctor and Jesús "Eddie" would discover it in the end. People, she insisted, don't believe for hundreds and hundreds of years in something that never existed in the first place. Moreover, she had heard of this Carmen Cortez, who was said to be a very powerful *curandera* who had healed many people of cancer and was supposed to have special powers when it came to curing erectile dysfunction. If the *curandera* confirmed that the Spanish treasure was buried on Ladron Peak and foretold

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the location where it would be dug up, then these things must be so. And wasn't Héctor glad now to have lost his race for Congress two years ago, since, if he were a politician, he'd never have the time to go on a treasure hunt? The Villas could use the money, and now they'd be able to buy Bro. Billy Joe the church roof he wanted and never feel the pinch. Anyhow, it was better to be rich than famous or powerful, AveMaría concluded. And, after all, where was a person more likely to stumble on a fabulous legendary treasure trove than in El Norte, Land of Opportunity?

The expedition to Ladron Peak departed early in the morning of a soft spring day in late May, before the young clouds had begun to form above the wilderness of the upper Gila River country west of the Rio Grande and the Manzano Mountains lying east of the great river. The party was seen off from the Villa residence, where Beatriz Juárez had joined AveMaría and the children beneath a banner depicting Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. In the interests of security, neither Dubya nor Contracepción had been entrusted with the secret of their father's quest. Instead, they'd been told that he and Jesús "Eddie" were making a camping trip to the Gila River to go fishing. At almost the last moment, Dubya cried out that they'd forgot their fishing rods, and disaster was averted only by Jesús, who quick-wittedly assured the kid that their rods were collapsible and packed safely in the bed of the pickup underneath all the gear. As the truck drew away down the street, Héctor, watching in the tow mirror as his family diminished behind the swirling, plunging folds of Our Lady's banner, felt his eyes grow wet and his throat close up. Perhaps he would be bitten by a rattlesnake and die in the desert without ever seeing them again!

Though Ladron Peak rose only 20 miles southwest of Belen by line of sight, the journey to the broad circular base of the mountain was much farther, since that much of the approach was by winding and tortuous four-wheel-drive track across deep canyons and steep arroyos in which the Dodge toiled, rolling, pitching, and careening like a small boat in an ocean storm for five hours. Now Ladron Peak reared nearly above them, a massif of warped, twisted, and decaying rock blazing out against a high blue sky beneath the white sun of noonday, but the treasure seekers had yet to begin the steep ascent to the top of the wide pedestal where they'd planned to make base camp that evening.

In spite of the bright sharp light, the vivid colors of the rocks rearing overhead, and the comforting touch of a light spring wind, Héctor gazed upon the mountain with apprehension amounting almost to dread. Had not the *curandera* mentioned that Ladron Peak was a place of bad magic, alive with evil spirits? He'd forgotten her warning, until now. And now was too late to turn back. AveMaría would never believe that her husband was anything but a craven worm, a *cobarde*.

"You want another beer, compadre?" he asked Jesús "Eddie" in a brave voice. ©

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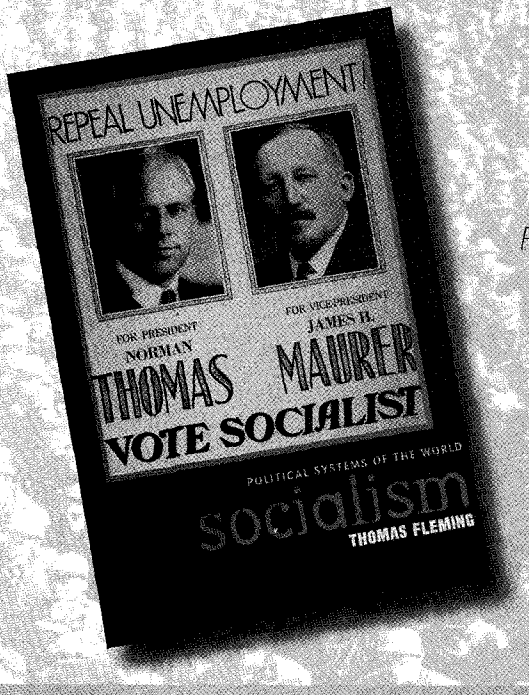

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